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LUKE SHARP.

*Page 179.*

# LUKE SHARP;

OR,

KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT RELIGION.

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“He that hath small understanding, and feareth God, is better than one who hath much wisdom, and transgresseth the law of the Most High.”—ECCLES. XIX. v. 24.

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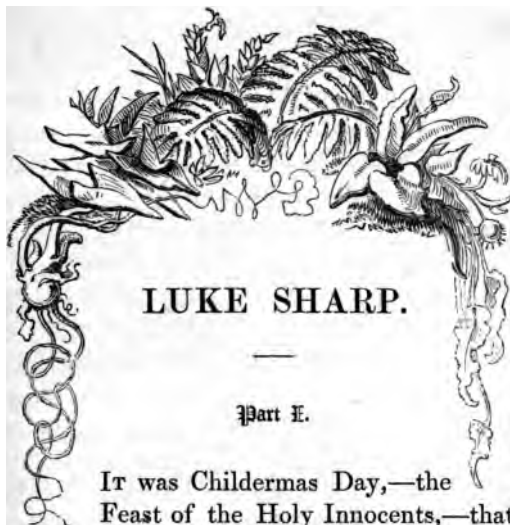
THE ensuing tale has been written for the use of lads who are just leaving, or who have lately left school, and who, on going out to service, or to learn a trade, are sure to be exposed to the manifold trials and temptations which the devil, the world, and the flesh put in the way of youth, and from which there is no escape but in a Strength Which is greater than their own;—a Strength with Which no Godless scheme of mere secular education can supply them, but Which will not be wanting where the system of instruction has been carried out faithfully on Church Principles, and where the mind has been thoroughly imbued with the unfashionable truth that “*The Fear of the Lord* is the beginning of *Knowledge*.”

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LUKE SHARP.

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Part II.

It was Childermas Day,—the Feast of the Holy Innocents,—that day set apart by the Church to teach us that even infants may glorify God by their deaths; and to give us an opportunity of reflecting on that wicked, worldly spirit which induced Herod to become a cruel murderer in his attempts to fight against God, and of offering up our prayers to the Giver of all good, that He would be pleased to mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by His grace, that by

the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith unto death (if need be), we may glorify His holy Name.

And Childermas Day is a day much thought of by the children at Yateshull. Many a festival there is with respect to which if you ask them at what time of year it falls, they will not be able to tell you,—at least not without thought, and running over some old rhyme, which they have heard their parents repeat, such as

“ Barnaby bright,  
All day, no night ;”

which will suggest the recollection, that the feast of S. Barnabas must be in summer,—as indeed it is, on the eleventh of June ; or

“ Bartholomew,  
With his cold dew ;”

which will bring back remembrance of the burning days in the harvest field, and the chilly evenings, and the heavy dews hanging longer and longer upon the grass, and so fix the time of S. Bartholomew’s festival for the end of August.

But there is no such difficulty in remem-

bering when Childermas day falls. Not a child in Yateshull but will tell you the moment you put the question, that it is the third day after Christmas ; for Childermas day is a great day indeed with them.

In former times, when a great deal of weak and wicked superstition was mixed up with better things, and some of the strange fancies of their ancient heathenism yet lingered in the minds of our forefathers, they retained the notion that some days were lucky and some unlucky. This was sad folly, because, as Christians, they ought to have considered that nothing happens but by God's appointment, and that His Providence is as much extended over them that love Him on one day as another. However, so it was ; and nobody would be married, or put on a new suit of clothes, or even cut their nails, on Innocents' day. Nay, so far was the prejudice carried, that with some persons, whatsoever day in the week that festival occurred, Monday, or Tuesday, or any other, nothing would they begin on that day through the year ensuing. There was, indeed, one class of persons to whom this day


was a very unlucky one, and that was the children, for it was the custom to whip them out of their bed, on the morning of the Innocents' day, in order that, by the infliction of sharp pain on themselves, they might, as it was alleged, learn to have a compassionate remembrance of the poor babes of Bethlehem.

But the children at Yateshull in modern times had no such silly or uncomfortable associations with Childermas. It was the day of their school feast. That same good Sir Geoffrey Yateshull who (as was mentioned in a former tale\*) founded Yateshull School, and set apart the playground, and planted it with shady trees, provided also, that all the children educated on his foundation should be supplied with a dinner yearly, on some one of the twelve days between the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany. Accordingly, Childermas day had, time out of mind, been set apart for that purpose; and I do believe that its celebration gave more pleasure in Yateshull than all the other Christmas festivities, as they are called, put together. Parents loved to see their children enjoying

\* See "Tales of Village Children," Vol. I. p. 218.

themselves, and to recall their own school-days, when they themselves were glad with the joy of childhood, and their brows were as yet unfurrowed with sorrows and anxieties. And as for the children, they, for a long time previously, were looking forward to their festival, and counting the days that intervened before its arrival. "Mother, it only wants twenty days to our feast;" or "Father, don't you think it seems a *very* long while to Tuesday week?" were the kind of remarks which were to be heard by many a fire-side through the month of December.

And let not the reader suppose that it was only the thought of eating and drinking, of roast beef, and apple-pie, and plum-pudding, that made the Yateshull children so eager for Childermas, though, to those who seldom get a better meal than potatoes and bacon, and very often potatoes alone, a good dinner of meat and pudding is by no means a thing to be despised: for on that day there was a distribution of rewards to the scholars of the several classes, and many a heart beat with eager hope of obtaining some testimony of





merit, and rarely was any one disappointed in that hope whose conscience told him that he had been steadily exerting himself to do his best during the preceding year.

It was Childermas day ; and though there was a sharp biting frost, and a sprinkling of snow on the ground, you might see the boys leaving their homes as soon as it was light, and before they had had their breakfast, and gathering in knots before the schoolmaster's house.

" Well, and what do you come plaguing me for, at this time in the morning ?" Mr. Dilwyn would say to them, smiling while he pretended to scold.

" Please, Sir, we thought perhaps we could help you to dress the school."

" Dress the school ? why you have hardly given me time to dress myself. Why don't you go and get your breakfasts ?"

" Oh ! I don't want any breakfast, Sir," one boy would exclaim, " if I can be of any use."

" Nor I,— " Nor I," joined in a dozen more.

" Indeed ?" the schoolmaster would reply.  
" Nor any dinner, I suppose ?"

The boys grinned.

"Well, *you* may not want any breakfast, but *I* do, and there will be no dressing of the school, I can tell you, till I have had mine."

"May we cut up the holly and ivy into smaller bunches?" some elder boy would ask, pointing to a great heap which had been left overnight by the wood cutters; "I've got a knife, Sir."


"And please, Sir," another would inquire, "had not I better pick out the boughs with the most berries on? the girls always string some berries to hang in festoons over their fire-place."

"And couldn't we be bringing the tressels and spare forms out of the out-house?" two or three more voices would ask eagerly.

Mr. Dilwyn had no chance of a comfortable breakfast on Childermas day, unless he breakfasted by candlelight: but what cared the kind-hearted old man for that? Half-scolding, half-laughing, he would beckon "the plagues of his life," as he called them, to the door, and giving them a push on the shoulder as they passed him, would send them crowding, and

jostling, and tumbling one over another, into his kitchen, and supply each with a hunch of bread and a draught of milk, in order, as he alleged, to save time; but really, perhaps, because, loving his scholars as if they were his children, it was the happiness of his life to exercise towards them (wherever their conduct allowed him to do so) all the little acts of parental kindness which his position gave him the opportunity of exercising.


And now, good reader, you must please to imagine for yourself, for I have a long story to tell, and no time for description, how, when the meal was ended, master and scholars betook themselves to hard work; how the old walls of the school-room were decked with holly and ivy, and how wreaths of the same material hung down from the oaken rafters of the dark, high-pitched roof; how the usual furniture of the school was removed, and in its place was substituted a long row of tables, with their clean white cloths, and seats on either side. He must fancy to himself all the hurry and bustle (unnecessary, it must be confessed, but what child loves not to be in a



bustle?) and how some boys would get in each other's way; and how some verified the proverb that "most haste is worst speed;" and how all worked as if their lives depended upon the preparations being finished by half-past nine o'clock; and how they next hastened home to get on their Sunday clothes, and quickly hastened back again to school, each with a sprig of holly and ivy in a button-hole of his jacket, ready to start for church (for at Yateshull we seek the Church's blessing on all we do) as soon as the first chime is heard.

And at Church there was the service proper for the festival of the Holy Innocents. And then Mr. Warlingham preached a sermon to the children. One only day in all the year, he said, he made it to them exclusively, and therefore, as it was very short, and very easy to be understood, he intreated them to give him their *whole* attention. After that, he spoke to them affectionately of the blessings which they enjoyed, and of the duties which those blessings involved; of the trials which would await them when they would be no longer under the control of parents and

teachers, and of the absolute necessity there was that they should devote the best years of their life,—their youth as well as their age,—to God's service, if they hoped to be able to keep their part of the Baptismal Covenant, and to be received hereafter, through their Saviour's merits, into His eternal kingdom in heaven. "And above all things," said Mr. Warlingham, "remember what I am about to say, for we live in times when many have forgotten it, and when you are likely to be tempted to forget it. *Remember this, that the object we have in teaching you to read and write, is not first or chiefly in order to help you on in your worldly calling, but in order that you may learn God's will, and that having learned it you may do it.* 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' The power to read and write is a good or a bad thing, according to the purposes to which it is turned. If the knowledge you acquire here serves only to puff you up, to make you self-confident, or vain, or worldly-minded, if you put to a bad use acquirements which have been bestowed on you in order that with them yo




may glorify God, serve His Church, and benefit your fellow creatures, it had been better for you that you had lived and died blind and dumb, or rather that you had never been born. The tree of knowledge is not the tree of life. And if you receive the *knowledge* we give you, and do not at the same time profit by the lessons of *religion* which are afforded you,—if you do not carry out in your daily lives the teaching of the Church, then I solemnly warn you, that your knowledge will not be a blessing, but a curse.”

Some of the lesser boys did not understand what Mr. Warlingham meant by this; but the elder ones did, for it was only a repetition of what both he and Mr. Dilwyn had said to them almost every day of their lives. They understood it, and now as they felt the time to be drawing more near when they must go into the world and shift for themselves, they were glad to be reminded of it, and had both a wish to profit by the advice, and a hope that they should not forget it when their time of trial should come.

But there was one of the elder boys who

did not feel at all pleased with Mr. Warlingham's observations, for he had a very strong feeling in favour of the advantages of knowledge, and, unhappily for himself, he had very little sense of religion. Luke Sharp had the best head for arithmetic of any boy in the school, and no one could approach him in penmanship; his writing, as his father often told him, was "like copperplate, and would be a recommendation to a good situation any day." And Luke Sharp was a clever boy in other respects: he could turn his hand to anything, as the saying is; so for his part he was sure it was only prejudice that could make anybody speak slightingly of knowledge; and besides, he had often seen Mr. Warlingham's hand-writing, and it was *not at all* "like copperplate."

If any one had asked Luke what he meant by "prejudice," it is very probable that he might have been puzzled to find a reply. There are people who pick up words just as parrots and magpies do, and who use them without knowing more of their meaning than parrots and magpies. And there are word



which every now and then come into fashion, and because they happen to be the fashion, are repeated by everybody, and however mischievous and nonsensical they may be, pass current for sense, because people like to be in the fashion, and because it is often much pleasanter and easier to talk without thinking, than to weigh words before they are spoken.

Luke had caught the word from his father, who in his turn had picked it up from some of his friends in the Reform Club at Amworth, or from some of the Sunday newspapers. Whenever anybody differed from Mr. Sharp he was told he was *prejudiced*. Anything which other folks venerated, but which he disliked, was sure to be set down as a *prejudice*. Respect for the opinions of our forefathers was, in his language, a prejudice; obedience to the Church, a prejudice; scrupulous honesty, a prejudice; unwillingness to take advantage of the helplessness or simplicity of others, a prejudice.

And Luke, being a shrewd boy, had observed that many people were afraid of being called prejudiced, and so yielded up their



opinion without more ado; and further he had remarked, that on his father's lips the phrase was a very convenient one; he turned it to profitable account, and made it an excuse for doing many things for which he might have found it hard enough to find any better excuse. So Luke thought it would be a good plan to adopt the same system, and to try and gain his own ends by mocking at what he called *prejudices*. And I am sorry to say, he, too, found little difficulty in scaring many of his school-fellows, and leading them to join him in bad ways when he began to work upon their fears of being called "prejudiced." There were but few of them who had courage to tell him that prejudice (that is a prepossession in favour of, or against a certain thing) may be not only harmless, but to be desired; and that, in some cases, prejudice is a direct Christian duty. There were not many boys who liked to expose themselves to the pain of being laughed at by Luke, or who were afraid of his sharp, bitter gibes. They were cowards; and a coward is a miserable for a boy to be. A cowardly boy a

always makes a cowardly man, and a cowardly man can never be an eminent Christian.

But who was this Luke? Luke was the son of a man who, at the time when this tale commences, was supposed to be growing rich faster than anybody else at Yateshull. And certainly if thinking of nothing and caring for nothing but gaining money, is likely to make a man rich, Mr. Sharp, as he now called himself, stood a fair chance of becoming wealthy.

Twenty years before, Jerry Sharp had been hired as a day labourer, by the person who rented Yateshull mill. Where he came from nobody knew, and why he was hired nobody knew, unless his own account of the matter was true, that he had been so long out of work, that he was glad to engage himself for wages which would hardly keep a dog alive from week's end to week's end. His clothes were almost in rags; he was pale, and weak, and half-starved; and being too poor to pay for a lodging, he slept for many weeks in a stall among the mill waggon-horses.

Once established in service, however, his outward appearance began to mend, and it was soon evident that for some quality or other he had recommended himself to his employer. Years rolled on and found him in a more thriving condition. He was in the receipt of good wages, and had married a woman much older than himself, who had the reputation of having saved money in service, and was known to have received a handsome legacy from a deceased mistress. She, however, died soon after the birth of her only child, Luke. The only regret her husband was ever heard to express with respect to her death was, that if she had lived a few years longer, he should have been saved the expense of putting the child out to nurse. The fact was, he was now gaining that which was more to him than either wife or child—*money*. Money was his idol: to grow rich the sole object of his desires: everything else was sacrificed to this. And had he been content with moderate profits, and a gradual increase of income, he might, perhaps, in the end have been a rich man,—*perhaps*, for riches make themselves wings, and fly away,

even when seemingly most secure. But Jeremiah Sharp was in a hurry to grow rich, and so he lent out money on exorbitant interest, and speculated, as it is called (that is, tried to profit by other men's losses), and did all those greedy, grinding, selfish things into which men are sure to be betrayed who forget that awful warning of Scripture, "O trust not in wrong and robbery, give not yourselves unto vanity: *if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*"

At the time when this tale commences Jeremiah Sharp did a good deal of business as a baker at Yateshull; he also dealt in groceries, and such things as are usually found "at the shop" in a country village; and besides this, he was part owner of a mill at Amworth, and had vested the remainder of his money in a mining concern in North Wales, which he declared would pay him an interest of twelve pounds yearly on every hundred which he laid out. Some of his friends suggested to him that there must be a risk proportioned to the advantage so speciously held out, and that a rate of interest so much higher than could be

got elsewhere had a suspicious look with but Baker Sharp had his answer ready: laughed at their old-world *prejudices*; "learn me," said he, "to look after my own affairs. I am not one to be taken in easily, I can tell you. I have made a trifle already," he continued, thrusting his hand into his pocket and chinking the money which was in it, "and I intend to make a little more, before I shut up shop, and live like a gentleman."

But in spite of all his fine words, Sharp was not as confident as he pretended to be. Like all other gamblers he was one while full of hope, and at another while full of despair, now winning and now losing; and all the while devoured by anxiety lest he should miss an opportunity, or fail to turn it to the best account. In the eyes of the world, and perhaps in his own, he was prosperous: but the ground on which he stood was hollow, and the money for the sake of which he was perilling his soul was not so securely in his possession as he supposed it to be.

Having made the reader so far acquainted with this unhappy man's character, it is almost

unnecessary to add that he was devoid of all serious feeling on the subject of religion. No man, indeed, who loves money, can be accounted a Christian before God, or hope to attain a place in heaven, because He has distinctly told us that "covetousness is idolatry," and that "all idolaters shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." But many a covetous, money-loving man goes through life decently, has a good moral character, preserves a fair outside, and is esteemed a respectable person, and is rather popular than otherwise. But even this was not the case with Sharp. Many feared him, but no one loved him. Most of his neighbours were afraid to quarrel with him, for he was known to be of a spiteful, unforgiving temper, but none of them would be on familiar terms with him, for his purse-proud airs made him very offensive to them. To those above him he was servile and cringing; to his equals rude and overbearing; to those beneath him harsh and unmerciful. Of course, therefore, he joined himself in politics to those who, while they profess themselves eager advocates

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of what they call liberty, desire in their hearts to bring about a revolution which shall uproot the whole fabric of society, and involve high and low in suffering and misery. He called himself a Churchman, but he never entered the Church; and when Mr. Warlingham expostulated with him on his conduct, he replied that Sunday was the only day in the week on which he had leisure to make up his books, and added that if he was to be interfered with he should join the Dissenters, and may be build a dissenting chapel on his own land. Mr. Sharp, in short, like many more of his class at the present day, was one who thought that he had a full right to do whatever he pleased, so long as he paid his way. And he had done all he could to make his son Luke like himself.

The reader must forgive this long interruption of the course of our tale, (for without a previous explanation with respect to the character of Luke's father, much of what follows would be unintelligible,) and he may imagine, if he will, that, during its progress, the school-children have returned from church,

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and that the dinner is smoking on the school-room tables. Plenty of mouths are ready for roast beef, and plenty of hands to carve it, and hand it about, and serve the potatoes, and fill the mugs with beer ; for all the neighbours make a point of coming to be useful at the school dinner. Three or four of the ladies in the squire's family, and the church-wardens and their wives and daughters, and several others were standing by the fire talking and laughing as neighbours will who are living comfortably together, happy among themselves, and happy in making others so, and thankful to meet each other once again on an occasion on which many of them have met every year since they were children.

And then Mr. Warlingham comes in, and says grace, and then all are seated, and there begins such a clattering of dishes, and rattling of knives and forks, and such a jabbering of merry tongues, as I suppose could scarcely be imagined by any one who has never been present on such an occasion. And joint after joint of beef disappears, till the carvers' arms begin to ache, and they wonder where so



much meat goes to. Where indeed! down some hundred and fifty throats, all engaged in swallowing as fast as they can swallow, the owners of the said throats apparently thinking that the more beef they can eat, the fairer claim have they on the apple pie and plum-pudding, which are to follow it. And strange to say, they are not the biggest boys, who have most room for it, but the little boys, who have least, that consume the largest amount of food.

“ I say, Bobby Ball, how you are stuffing and cramming! You’ll be sick by and by, I’m sure.”

“ Sick! no more sick than yourself, Ned; mother told me to be sure and eat a good dinner.”

“ Why, you had three helpings to beef!”

“ Well?”

“ And twice to potatoes.”

“ No, only once to potatoes.”

“ And twice to apple-pie.”

“ Well?”

“ And two great lumps of pudding.”

“ Well?

“ And you haven’t done yet ? ”

“ Well ? ” grunted Bobby in an injured tone, as he bolted the last morsel.

“ And may be you’ll ask for another helping.”

“ Well,” Bobby would have said, but something at that moment gave him a sudden turn ; he grew pale ; felt ‘ very queer ; ’ ‘ all no-how ; ’ drank some water ; gasped ; and sat silent ; and did *not* ask for another helping.

Well, gluttony is a disgusting thing, and though there may be an excuse for it in the case of a poor little lad who hardly ever had the opportunity of taking a full meal, and who only tasted beef and plum-pudding once a year, still we must remember that it is just at the very time when we have unusual opportunities and temptations that we are most especially bound to watch over ourselves. And there are many of us, it is to be feared, who have not Bobby Ball’s excuse, but who, nevertheless, are a great deal too anxious about what we shall eat, and what we shall drink ; — who think lightly of the sin of gluttony ; who do not bear in mind that gluttony is one of

those sinful lusts of the flesh which we renounced at our baptism; that it was for a meal that Adam was cast out of Paradise; that the Christian must be "temperate in all things"; that his life must be a life of self-denial, and that the way to learn to be self-denying in *great* things, is to deny ourselves continually and habitually in *little* things.


"It is necessary," says good Bishop Wilson, "that we should deny ourselves in little and indifferent things, when reason and conscience, which is the voice of God, suggest it to us, as ever we hope to get the rule over our own will."

"Say not, it is a trifle," he continues, "and not fit to make a sacrifice of to God. He that will not sacrifice a little affection, will hardly offer a greater. It is not the thing, but the reason and manner of doing it, namely for God's sake, and that I may accustom myself to obey His voice, that God regards, and rewards with greater degrees of grace."

Dinner is over; the tables cleared away; the boys drawn up in their respective places, a circle of chairs set for the ladies, and Mr.

Warlingham is standing at the desk usually occupied by Mr. Dilwyn, arranging before him a goodly array of books, and knives, and such things as boys love to possess, and which form the usual articles of distribution on such occasions. Many were the eager looks, and suppressed exclamations as one after another each separate reward, neatly ticketed, was brought out of the basket beside him, and placed so as to be ready when wanted.

“ My good young friends,” said he, “ (and I am glad to say that I think in the main you deserve the title, though the best of you is far from what he ought to be, and the better he becomes the worse will he learn to think of himself), I have said so much to you in my sermon this morning on the duties of Christian children, that I shall make no further remarks to you on that subject. I will only repeat that as you in this place have advantages which thousands of children in this country have not, so will God require far more at your hands. He will judge you with a stricter judgment, and will call you to a more severe account than others. In propor-



tion as knowledge has been given you, will He expect that you make a good use of it, and not turn it as so many do, to their own destruction. And when I say a *good* use of it, I mean that you should use it in those ways *only* which ye know will be pleasing to Him; in those ways only in which it will help you to learn and labour truly, and do your duty in that state of life to which it may please Him to call you. When you have learned all that we can teach you here, you will still be very ignorant in many respects, and very indifferent scholars, so that the cleverest and quickest of you will have no reason to be vain of his acquirements, nor to pride himself upon what he knows, nor to think that he has any thing to boast of; and yet I hope there will be none of you that leaves us without being thoroughly instructed in that which is the beginning of all wisdom, and without which all wisdom is valueless or worse,—namely the fear of the Lord; I hope there will be none who have not been taught to love and reverence and obey the Church, Who is the Mother of us all; I hope there

will be none who have not been taught that the one great object for which they have been sent into the world is to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, and that nothing is of consequence compared with that. It may be well for you to endeavour to get on, as it is called, in the world; it may be well that you should turn your talents to account by cultivating such branches of worldly knowledge as may be of use to you in your future callings, but these things will never bring you to heaven: there is only one thing which by God's mercies in Christ Jesus will enable you to arrive there, namely, such a knowledge of His will as inspires you to *obey* Him in all things. 'Wisdom is a defence,' saith the wisest of men, 'and money is defence; but the excellency of knowledge,' that is *religious* knowledge, 'is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.'

"And now," continued Mr. Warlingham, "I shall proceed to reward those among you whom Mr. Dilwyn has reported to me as deserving some mark of approval for their diligence, obedience, and good conduct generally.

How much pleasanter is it to reward than to punish ! I can never grow tired of rewarding ; the more there are to be rewarded the better pleased am I ; and, as I often tell you, the greater the number of those whom we see taking pains, the greater will be the number of rewards distributed. Acting upon this rule, I am glad to say that there are no less than six boys in the first class to whom I shall give a prize : Harry Martin, Edward Smith, Job Wilcox, Thomas Green, Edwin Dunn, John Page, and Luke Sharp. And first, Harry Martin."

With glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes Harry approached the desk.

" Martin," said the Vicar, " it is a subject of great sorrow to me to think that this is the last reward, which as a school-boy, you will ever receive at my hands ; for you have now arrived at an age when it is necessary you should learn the trade by which you are to get your future livelihood. You have now been at school six or seven years, you have worked your way up from the last place in the last class to the first place in the first, and I

believe that in each class through which you have passed you have carried off a prize. And you deserve the more credit for this, because you had not nearly so much natural talent as many of your rivals; nevertheless by your diligence, steadiness, and the pains you have taken with yourself, you have at length distanced them all. That, however, which has gained for you the esteem of Mr. Dilwyn and myself, is this, that we have seen you thankfully following our advice, getting the mastery over your faults, trying to form your own character according to what you have been taught that a Christian should be: and lastly, endeavouring both by your influence and your example to make your companions industrious, well-behaved boys. I am not afraid of praising you, for I know you to be a modest boy, and one who feels that as yet you have only made a beginning, and that there is no time on this side the grave in which you must not be daily endeavouring to improve yourself. I therefore do not hesitate to tell you that your removal from school will be a great loss to us, and that it would be a still



greater if I was not aware that you are likely to live at Yateshull, and did not feel satisfied that you would set as good an example in this village as you have in the school. I now make you a present of Izaak Walton's Lives; and I hope by the blessing of God, you will be enabled to become as pious and wise, as just and true, as humble and self-denying, as charitable and simple-minded, as good in the various relations of life, as loyal a subject, as dutiful a churchman, as devout a Christian, as in their respective generations were those holy men, whose lives I now recommend you to make the model of your own."

When Mr. Warlingham had commenced this address the thought came into Harry Martin's mind that he ought to endeavour to thank him and Mr. Dilwyn for all the kindness they had shewn him during so many years, but, as the Vicar went on, and thoughts of the past and future rose up before Harry's imagination, he felt a lump rising in his throat, and the tears filled his eyes, and before Mr. Warlingham had done, they were trickling down his face, so that when the moment for speak-

ing came, speak he could not. He took the book, and bowed, and began to falter out some expression of gratitude, but the words seemed to choke him.

The Vicar saw the struggle, understood it, and kindly relieved him. "Well, well," said he as he laid his hand on Harry's head, "I believe I know what you would say, and you can come and say it, if you like, by-and-by. There is Edward Smith getting quite impatient, I dare say, to know what prize we have in store for him."

And then Edward Smith was called up, and some kind words of encouragement spoken to him. After he had received his reward, the others, each in turn, were summoned to the desk, and received their appropriate commendations, mingled with such kind advice, or kind exhortations to increased diligence, or admonitions with respect to some point on which they were defective, as the character of the boy addressed seemed to require. At length it came to Luke Sharp's turn, who had been shifting his position uneasily, now standing on one leg, and now

on another, with a look of vexation and impatience, from the moment that he had heard his own name the last on the list. He had not expected to be first, but he had made sure of being second.

“ Luke Sharp,” said the Vicar, addressing him, “ Mr. Dilwyn thinks that you have some claim for a reward on the ground that you are the best writer and accountant in the school. And when Mr. Dilwyn makes a recommendation of this kind, I am not apt to be unwilling to attend to it. If, however, I do give you a reward, I shall mark my opinion that you hardly deserve it, by taking care that it is of far less value than the other prizes, and by thus publicly stating that I set no store upon cleverness when it is not attended with those higher qualities which can alone make a man happy here or hereafter.”

Luke was not one of those persons who are troubled with shyness, or who are afraid to speak in their own defence. “ Please Sir, I dont know what I have done. I am sure I can read as well as any of the other boys; and I can learn by heart quicker, and write

and sum better than Edward Smith, to whom you have given the second prize."

"It may be so," replied Mr. Warlingham. "I do not doubt it."

"Please Sir, will you look at my copy book," said Luke, gaining confidence as he went on. And then he muttered something of which only one word reached the Vicar's ear,—' unjust.'

"What is unjust?" asked Mr. Warlingham.

"It seems very hard, very unjust, that such a difference should be made between me and Smith." And he held out his copy book.

"That is your copy book, is it?" asked the the Vicar. "Now give me Smith's, and Martin's, and all the other boys' who have just received prizes." They were handed to him, and he spread them out where all the company could see them.

"Yes," he said, after a hasty comparison, "I think you say no more than truth: I consider your writing the best. And you inform me, Mr. Dilwyn, that this boy is quicker at his arithmetic, than any one of your present pupils?"

The schoolmaster intimated his assent.

“ And he learns by heart more rapidly, because with greater ease, than the others ? ”

“ He does, Sir,” was Mr. Dilwyn’s reply.

“ He is quick and clever at his other tasks, is he not ? ”

“ He can do any thing he pleases, when he chooses to take the trouble,” answered Mr. Dilwyn.

“ Very well,” continued the Vicar. “ Now then, as to his general conduct. Is he regular in his attendance at church and school ? ”

“ At school he is generally regular ; from church he is frequently absent without leave.”

“ What is his excuse ? ”

“ He says his father keeps him at home to help him in his accounts.”

“ I heartily wish, then,” replied the Vicar, “ that he did not know so much of arithmetic as that two and two make four. But now as to his behaviour in church, is he reverent and devout ? ”

“ I am sorry to say, Sir, that he is much the reverse, and I have had frequent com-

plaints that when my eye has been off him, which is as seldom as possible,—a sure sign I cannot trust him—he is attempting to make those around him behave ill.”

“ If he can so act in God’s immediate presence, I can have little hope of him elsewhere. Is he steady and to be trusted at school ?”

Mr. Dilwyn shook his head.

“ Is he truthful ?” inquired the Vicar.

“ Twice, in the course of the last year, I have detected him in falsehood. And in sins of the tongue generally I fear he is a frequent transgressor. I hear him use bad words, I am sorry to say, not rarely.”

“ And yet, Mr. Dilwyn, in spite of all this, you have recommended him for a reward.”

“ I did so, Sir, as I apprized you, solely on the ground that he is superior to the boys in his class in those particular attainments to which reference has been made, and because he has certainly taken considerable pains to acquire a proficiency in them.”

“ Now then, boys,” said the Vicar, “ I suppose you all understand why Luke Sharp has the lowest prize of all, and why I have had


considerable doubt about bestowing one of any kind upon him. I am unwilling to give any encouragement to those who, having talents, abuse them, or who satisfy themselves with acquiring mere knowledge, and make no efforts to correct their faults, or to keep those awful vows which were made in their names at their baptism. Have you anything more to say for yourself, Sharp?"

"It seems very hard" . . . . Luke began, and then stopped.

"What seems hard?" asked Mr. Warlingham, sternly.

"I'm sure I'm no worse than others," answered the boy, a good deal abashed, but still set upon excusing himself.

"Yes," replied the Vicar, "you are worse than others, both because you know your duty better, and neglect it more. There is the reward, such as it is, which I allot you as a good writer and accountant; but remember this, you will receive no reward whatever on any future occasion unless you have some further claim upon us than your present proficiency; and I very solemnly warn



you that unless you make a better use of your talents than you have yet done, those talents will be your ruin and curse instead of a blessing."

The Vicar held out a penknife. For a moment Luke was inclined to refuse it, for his pride was wounded: but he dared not, and then he thought within himself, that, after all, something was better than nothing; so he took the knife sullenly, expressed no thanks, and retiring to his place drew behind the other boys.

As soon as Mr. Warlingham was occupied with another class, Edward Smith, the boy who had received the second prize, approached Luke with the new gilt-edged Prayer-book in his hand, and whispered in his ear, " Luke, I know you write better than I do, and sum too, so I should like to change the rewards, if you please. Here, you just take the Prayer-book, and hand me over the knife, and then it will be all right." So saying the generous-hearted boy proffered the prize, which at that moment he certainly valued more than any other of his possessions.



But Luke pushed him roughly aside. "Get away with you!" said he, in a loud sulky whisper. "I don't want your books. You're the master's favourite. I hate favourites, and I hate you!" And then he pushed back into a darker corner, and stood there apart, till the business of the day was over, when avoiding all his school-fellows he slunk home, and as he saw them jumping and capering along, and heard their merry laughs, it was all bitterness and vexation to him.

And when he entered the house, he ran up stairs into his bed-room, shut to the door, and then burst into tears. But they were tears of rage and wounded vanity, not of penitence and contrition.

The same evening, when his father returned from market, and asked to see the prize which his son had carried off, and which he made no doubt would be a handsome one, he was met with a well-concocted story of injustice and favouritism, in which, by suppressing some facts, and perverting others, Luke made it appear that he had been very hardly used, and that while, by their own confession, the

Vicar and schoolmaster allowed him to have distinguished himself more than any boy in the school, they had, owing to some *prejudice* against him, withheld from him what was his due."

" Ah ! it's all prejudice," exclaimed the baker, with a shocking oath, " it's all jobbing, or favouritism that carries the day. High time there was a change : merit has no chance. I was sure you would be spited, just because I voted against a church-rate. Well, never mind, Luke ; I've cash enough to enable you to hold up your head by-and-by above the whole pack of them."

" Well, father, if you're satisfied, I'm sure I don't care for any of them. But I can't see any good that's likely to come of my staying on at school."

This was true enough, though not exactly in the sense in which Luke meant it. He was not likely to do any good at school, or elsewhere, while he continued as he was. What he wished to imply, however, was that he had learned all that could be learned at Yateshull ; for he was beginning to feel that

he had no chance of securing credit there, or retrieving his character; and, besides, some grand notions were taking possession of his mind, such as that restraint was irksome, and that he should like to have done with school altogether, and that in a few years more he would be a man, and though not quite a man yet, he was something more than a boy,—or at least would be when he had left school.

“ I was saying, father,” continued Luke, unwilling that his last remark should be lost, “ I was saying I don’t see what I am to gain by staying on longer at Yateshull school. I can beat all the boys there, and old Dilwyn won’t put himself out of his way to teach me more than the others.”

“ How old are you ?” inquired the father.

“ I shall be fifteen next November.”

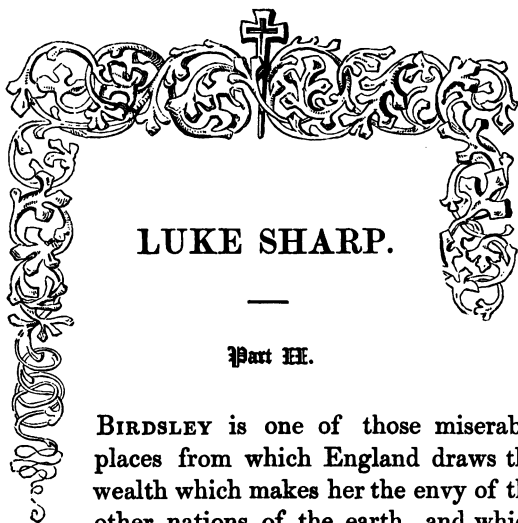
“ Aye, you are but just fourteen.”

“ I am two whole months older than fourteen,” observed Luke, resolved to make the most of his years.

“ I’ll tell you what, lad,” said baker Sharp, “ I dont intend to take you into the business for a year or two: you’re too young: but I’ll

tell you what I'll do, you shall go to your mother's brother at Birdsley, and we'll enter you for a twelvemonth at the great school that is just opened there. *There* you'll have a fair chance, I know; and we'll soon see if you don't carry all before you. And I'll give old Dilwyn a bit of my mind for his shameful conduct to you. That I will, my boy, as sure as my name is Jerry Sharp."

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## LUKE SHARP.

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### Part III.

BIRDSLEY is one of those miserable places from which England draws the wealth which makes her the envy of the other nations of the earth, and which is rapidly causing her to become the most guilty of all the countries that have forgotten God, and have brought down upon themselves in certain retribution the outpourings of His vengeance.

Birdsley is a manufacturing town. The district in which it is built is full of coal and iron, and in an evil hour the discovery was made that Birdsley presented greater advantages in this respect than any other locality in the neighbourhood. The consequence is, that

what was a little straggling village of two or three hundred inhabitants some five-and-forty years ago, is now a vast town, containing from fifteen to twenty thousand souls. Its pleasant fields are covered with crowded alleys; its air, once so pure, is now made dark and oppressive with the smoke of furnaces; its quiet sounds of country life are exchanged for the ceaseless noise of machinery; and railroads and steam engines now occupy the sites of green lanes, and ancient homesteads.

But this is not the worst part of the change. The orderly, well-conditioned villagers have been supplanted by a vast body of turbulent, reckless, poverty-stricken miners and mechanics, sunk, for the most part, in the depths of ignorance and vice.

For they to whom the soil belonged, and they whose coal and iron brought thousands and tens of thousands into their pockets yearly, though calling themselves Christians, and professing to believe that they must one day stand before the judgment seat of God, made no provision for the spiritual welfare of those crowds of their fellowmen by whose labours

they were enriched. They paid them their wages, and seemed to suppose that that was all that was required of them. They treated them like beasts of burden, and as if they had no higher destiny than to work for them till they were worn out, and then to perish like the brutes. Churchmen, too, they called themselves: but they built no new churches or schools to receive the teeming population. No endowments did they provide for additional clergy to instruct them.

And so the end has been that the mass of the people at Birdsley are of no religion whatever. It is not a question between the Church and dissent: they are nothing. They are without God in the world; they neither love Him, nor fear Him, nor know Him. Only His Name is familiar to them as something which they mingle with their curses and with which they blaspheme.

A few dissenting chapels have risen up Ranters, Baptists, and such like; and the Roman Catholics have of late gained many converts; and every year heresy and schism become more active and energetic. The

Church alone seems as if she could not make her voice to be heard. A single clergyman, with an income of seventy pounds,—a weakly person, doing all the good he can, but worn out with the labours and anxieties of his apparently hopeless task, surrounded with persons ready to oppose him wherever the opportunity arises, receiving no countenance or support from the upper classes,—(for the gentry all left the neighbourhood when the smoke began to come forth from the tall chimneys),—such is the spectacle which Birdsley exhibited at this period; and there are still many Birdsleys in England.

About two years before our tale commences there had been a great deal of rioting among the collieries and iron works in the Birdsley district. The people were half-starved; and knowing no better,—having been taught nothing of the duty of obedience to the laws of God and man, they readily listened to, and became the tools of, certain seditious persons, who hoped to profit by the confusion arising from insurrectionary movements. Many outrages had been committed, houses set on fire

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or razed to the ground, shops pillaged, and liquor-vaults broken into. Then the military had been called in, and a conflict had taken place, in which lives had been lost; and then, as is always the case under such circumstances, order had been restored, and the poor, ignorant, deluded people found out how they had been deceived, and returned to their usual round of exhausting labour, and to their more accustomed vices.

But these events, taken in conjunction with others which happened about the same time, awakened the anxiety of the rulers of the country; and it needed no prophet to tell them what must come at last, if the great body of labouring men in the manufacturing districts were to be left without instruction of any kind, and if thousands and tens of thousands of heathens, who neither feared God nor regarded man, were occupying the face of a once Christian country.

There was a sure remedy for the evil, but they missed finding it; or if they found it they were too cowardly or worldly-minded to use it. If they had given to Birdsley, with its

20,000 souls, the same proportion of spiritual advantage which it had when its population was three hundred,—if they had built twenty churches, and schools, and appointed twice twenty clergymen to assume the pastoral office,—there would, in the course of a few years, have been an end of the gross ignorance and open profligacy which was now unchecked at Birdsley. But this they were afraid to do. They were afraid of giving offence to the Dissenters; they were afraid of making the Church too powerful; they were afraid of asking Parliament for so much money as would be requisite to effect all this, and of being themselves thought no better than madmen if they should be bold enough to do what, nevertheless, they knew to be right. So they contented themselves with sending down an officer of their own to inquire into matters.

And he did inquire, and reported that the proper thing to do was to establish a police force, and set up a new school upon a new system; that he did not find that the people had any eagerness for more churches, which was, in his mind, a sign that no more churches

were wanted ; and that it was best to leave the people to build churches or chapels for themselves, and not to interfere with any man's religious opinion by seeming to give more encouragement to one form of religious belief than another.

Miserable, most miserable advice ! And its fruit will be seen by any one who walks through the streets of Birdsley on a Sunday. For what is the sight that then presents itself ? A few of the better dressed shopkeepers will be observed wending their way to the parish church ; a more numerous assemblage will be approaching the dissenting places of worship ; but to the mass of the people Sunday will be no *holy* day ; it will be a mere day of idleness or noisy excitement. You will meet men singly or in groups, wandering about in their working aprons and caps, or with dirty shirt-sleeves tucked up, and coal-blackened arms, and grimed faces. Some look haggard and but half awake, as if they had been up all night,—probably at work, to recover the time lost by their idleness in the early part of the past week,—perhaps drink-

ing. Women in their working dresses standing about at doors or ends of passages, with folded arms. Grown lads playing at marbles, or chuck-farthing. And then the children ! the wretched, pale-faced, hapless-looking children ! Some quarrelling and fighting, bad words and bloody faces ; some sitting on rubbish heaps ; some squatting in holes in the ground, playing at mining ; some tormenting a cat or a pig, or rolling together on the road, boys and girls promiscuously, dirty, ragged, with their long uncombed hair hanging about their faces. No merriment, no laughter, no smiles,—none of the natural ways of happy village children,—but squalid disorder, indifference, and utter waste in self-disgust of the day of which in every sense they should make the most.\* The people at Birdsley want no churches, no clergy, no religious instruction, for the mass of them have been left so long without these advantages that they have lost all sense of their value. They desire them no more than the most benighted heathen does ; and, as in the case of the heathen, the

\* See Report of the Children's Employment Commission, Q. 22. xvi.

Gospel must first be preached among them without their seeking for it ; it is vain waiting till they inquire after that which can have no attractions for them. In this case the supply must precede the demand.

At the time of which we are speaking a godless scheme was just brought into fashion of educating children without religion. Knowledge was to do everything, or if not quite that, it was at least to do so much, that religion was not to be the *first* thing thought of. And then it was discovered that if nothing was said about religion, or rather about the *doctrines* of religion, children of all sects could be educated together. And this was thought to be a very convenient and expedient plan for large towns.

So the schools were set up, and clever masters appointed to the charge of them, who not only taught the children to read and write and cast accounts, but gave them lessons in geography, and chronology, and twenty other things, which are all very good in their way, though, perhaps, not likely to be of much use to poor children. *The one thing, however, which was really needful was omitted.* Great

professions indeed were made by those who set up these schools that they desired nothing better than that the children should be religious, but religion was a thing which their parents should teach them at home, or which might be inculcated upon them for an hour or two weekly by their respective ministers. The use of the Bible was not wholly forbidden : such children as chose to read it might do so, but the master was not allowed to explain it in any way which could be more favourable to the opinions of one sect than of another. The consequence of this was, that in such a place as Birdsley, where many of the parents were utterly unqualified to teach their children, and where many of them had no ideas on the subject of, or respect for religion, the children of those who professed themselves to be of *no* religious persuasion (and they were not a few) received nothing deserving the name of religious instruction, and even those who were attended to by their respective ministers were only instructed superficially and inadequately. How was it possible, for instance, that the Curate of

Birdsley could take upon himself the duties of a schoolmaster, in addition to all those which had already worn him out and ruined his health ?

There were many people, however, who did not see the matter in this point of view. It was sufficient for them that large school-houses of imposing appearance had been raised in the town, that the schools were well filled, that Mr. Hampden was a very clever man, and taught the children many things that never were taught before, that he brought them on wonderfully in writing and arithmetic, and made them able to answer all manner of questions,—how many miles it was from the sun to the moon, and why apples fell to the ground instead of flying up to the clouds, and such like,—and above all, that the regularity and order which he maintained were wonderful. Accordingly, Mr. Hampden and Birdsley school became the talk of the country, and thither, on the strength of some slight acquaintance with Mr. Hampden, and of the great number of clever boys whom he “turned out,” did Jerry Sharp send his son Luke, in order, as he said, “to be finished.”

Birdsley school was just the place for such a boy as Luke Sharp. He had precisely the kind of talent which an establishment of that kind could not fail to bring out. Shrewd, quick-witted, ready, with plenty to say for himself, and an intelligent, though not open countenance, Luke only needed the acquirements of a few showy branches of knowledge to become one of the most promising boys (at least according to Mr. Hampden's view of things) in the school. These he soon mastered, and then he carried away prize after prize, and was continually pointed out to visitors as "a most favourable specimen of what the new system will do for boys."

And what had it really done for him? It had confirmed him in every sinful habit which he had before; it had encouraged the growth of others, which at Yateshull had hardly shewn themselves; it had deadened what little he had in him of religious principle, by shewing him how little religion was accounted of in the fashionable system of education; it had filled his mind with the notion that *it was better to be clever than to be good*; that not



“the fear of the Lord,” but how to get on in the world, and take care of one’s own interests are the beginning of wisdom; or in plain words, that the tree of knowledge is better than the tree of life.

“Well, Ned, and how are you getting on?” inquired Luke of that same Edward Smith with whom the reader has been made acquainted already,—for Luke usually spent his holidays at Yateshull, and a year had now elapsed since he had been entered at the Birdsley school,—“how are you getting on with old Dilwyn yonder? Just in the old humdrum way, I suppose. Catechism, Bible-lesson, Catechism: Bible-lesson, Catechism, Bible-lesson. That was how it used to be, was it not?”

“No, Luke, you know *that* as well as I do. It is not so long since you left us. And you remember quite well that we learned to do many things besides read the Bible, and say the Catechism,” replied Smith colouring up, for he did not like to hear things which he was used to reverence slightly spoken of.

"Well, I know one thing, I never learned anything worth knowing while I was at Yates-hull school."

"Where did you learn to write?" asked Smith. "You used to think a great deal of your writing formerly."

It was now Luke's turn to colour up; for this question of Smith's was a kind of home thrust from which there was no escape. He was silent for a moment, but soon recovered his wonted assurance.

"Perhaps I did learn a thing or two," he said, "which were of some use: but the things old Dilwyn thought most about, we think nothing of at Birdsley."

"Indeed?"

"There's the Catechism for instance. It is so long since I said that that I'm sure I couldn't repeat it now."

"Do you mean that the boys at Birdsley don't say their Catechism?" inquired Ned.

"No, never. And what's more, they needn't go to church even on a Sunday, if they don't like it."

"I'm sure Birdsley must be a very bad

place then," observed Smith, "I'm very glad I'm not there."

"Aha, lad! the grapes are sour," retorted Luke, with a look which he meant should be very knowing. "Wait till you have the opportunity. It is not everybody's father who can send his son to a school like that."

"I know my father is poor, but were he ever so rich I'm sure he would not send me to Birdsley."

"How do you know that, Ned?"

"Because he's a good Christian, and loves the Church, and would not have his children brought up otherwise than as the Church commands."

"But what has this to do with the Catechism?"

"Why, the Church directs us all to use it. It is 'an instruction to be learned of *every person*, before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop.'"

"Ah, that may be well enough where there are only Church-children to be taught, but there are some of all kinds at our school. Baptists, and Wesleyans, and Romans, and

plenty more; and they wouldn't put up with being taught the Church Catechism."

"Then that would be another reason why my father would not send me to Birdsley. He would not send a son of his to be brought up with Dissenters."

"That's because he's so full of prejudice."

"Not at all: but because he thinks schism a sin, and because he believes that doctrines which are not held by the Church are *false* doctrines."

"We don't trouble our heads with doctrines, as they call them, at Birdsley: we leave those things to the ministers, and those that care about them,"

"Then I suppose you have given up your Bible-lessons as well as your Catechism, Luke?"

"Why do you suppose so?"

"Because different sects explain the Bible different ways."

"Oh, we have Bible-classes, but Mr. Hampden only explains the Scripture in a kind of way that would be inoffensive to parents of all opinions if they were present."

"Indeed? I wonder how he does that. I wonder how he explains the First Commandment, for instance."

"No great difficulty in that, Ned. He went through the four first commandments the last day we were at school."

"Have you any Jews among you, Ned?"

"Jews? What an odd question! I'm sure I don't know; there may be, for 'it's all fish that comes to our net'; we never trouble our heads about such matters. But why do you ask the question?"

"Because I was wondering whether your Mr. Hampden taught the Jews that there are Three Persons in One Godhead, as all Christians believe."

"Oh, that isn't the kind of thing that our master speaks about. He tells us that we are not to have more Gods than one, and then shews us what follies and superstitions the heathen fell into by being Polytheists."

"Dear me! what is that?" asked Smith, somewhat scared at his companion's learning. "What hard words you use!"

"Yes, we're taught the meaning of many

hard words at Birdsley. I dare say you don't know what's meant by hydrostatics."

"No, indeed I don't; what is it?"

"Steaming potatoes is hydrostatics," answered Luke with a grin.

"Oh, that's all, is it?" said Ned, "well then, I can do without that word. Now what are polytheists?"

"People who believe in more Gods than One."

"And is that all that Mr. Hampden teaches you about the First Commandment?"

"Oh no, he tells us all about the gods and goddesses of the Greeks and Romans, Jupiter and Juno, and Bacchus and Venus, and Pluto and Proserpine, and such queer tales out of a book called Ovid's *Metamorphoses*."

Ned stared, but uttered not a word.

"Ah, you're thinking that you never heard a word of this from old Dilwyn. But this isn't all; when Mr. Hampden has told us about the false gods of Greece and Rome, in old times, he teaches us about the idolaters of modern times,—Buddha and Vishna in India, and Mumbo-jumbo among the Africans."

"Have you any Africans at Birdsley."

"No, to be sure not, why do you ask?"

"I was only wondering how Mr. Hampden could instruct them in the First Commandment, without interfering with their religious belief," observed Ned Smith slyly, for, as our readers will have seen, he did not want for shrewdness. "Well, but go on: what else did he teach you?"

"Oh, there was no more. He always finishes that part of the lesson with Mumbo jumbo: it makes the boys laugh."

"But surely the superstition of these poor benighted heathen should be rather a matter of sorrow than of laughter to us."

"Well, perhaps so, but Mr. Hampden makes such an odd contrast between their strange notions, and our superior light, and the advance of knowledge and science among ourselves, that one can't help smiling."

"Mr. Dilwyn, I think, would rather have called on *us* to reflect, that if we, with such advantages as we have, fail to profit by them the very heathen will rise up against us in the judgment-day and condemn us."

"Old Dilwyn is a good man enough, I dare say," observed his former pupil, "though he never liked me: but the worst of his lessons was that they were so uncommonly prosy: and then he was so grave, and stiff, and preacher-like. He never amused us as Mr. Hampden does."

"He speaks reverently where he speaks of holy things; but over our sums, or geography, or such like, he is always ready enough for a laugh."

"Well, all I know is, I was none the better for those prosy questionings," observed Luke in a flippant tone.

"Whose fault was that Luke?" asked Ned gravely.

"Which is as much as to say that it was *mine*," replied the person addressed. "But I *am* the better for Mr. Hampden's lessons."

"In what respect?"

"Why I know so much more."

"Are those necessarily the best who know the most?"

"Upon my word, Ned, you ought to be called Dilwyn the Second. You are learning



to talk just like him. I wish you'd take to spectacles, and then you would be as much alike as two peas."

"Well, there's no knowing; perhaps I shall take to spectacles by-and-by," said Ned good-humouredly. "But before we finish our talk, I do wish you would answer me this one question. When Mr. Hampden's lesson is over, what are any of you the better for it? You will have been taught things that are curious and interesting about heathen customs and belief; but what have you learned more of your duty towards God by his lesson? If the commandments were given us in order to instruct us in our duty to God, surely *that* is rather the matter for us to consider, than how others have altogether failed to come to the knowledge of Him."

"I do not understand you, Ned."

"What I mean is this. Mr. Hampden uses the commandment we have been speaking of as a means by which to teach you things which you did not know already. Mr. Dilwyn uses it as a means to teach us how to become *better* than we were already. That is the difference between the two systems, is it not?"

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Sharp. "I don't remember how Dilwyn used to explain it."

"Why, first he would teach us the Church's doctrine with respect to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost,—Three Persons, and One God, and speak to us of the duty of believing the doctrine, without attempting to explain it; and he would warn us, by referring to the Athanasian Creed, of the dangerous errors into which persons have fallen, who have, instead of listening to the teaching of the Church, endeavoured to explain what cannot be explained, and so have either 'confounded the Persons, or divided the substance.'"

"But how are you the *better* for such instruction, Ned? You may *know* more; but I don't see that you are the *better* for a lesson in which you are taught these things."

"Mr. Dilwyn thinks otherwise; for he says that a corrupt faith has always a direct tendency to a corrupt practice."

"How so?"

"Why suppose, for instance, any person

were to deny that the Holy Ghost is God, such a person would not pray for His grace and assistance, and would, perhaps, come to think that he had strength and power enough in himself to do what is pleasing to God. Thus his corrupt faith would make his practice corrupt. But I had not finished what I was saying."

" Well then, go on."

" When Mr. Dilwyn has set these things before us, he will go on to show us how we ought to keep, and what are likely to be our temptations to break this commandment. He will shew us the great duty of reverence, and the great sin of setting up anything in our hearts which we love as well, or better than God. He will make us explain to him what it is to obey God, to serve Him, and to love Him. What it is to do this with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. What it is to glorify Him. Then he will bid us ask ourselves in what manner we are in the habit of approaching God in prayer. He will inquire of us *how* we ought to pray, *how often* we should pray? Have we said our prayers that

day? Did we hurry them over? Did we think of God at our meals? Have we honoured and served God that day by diligence and obedience at school? Have we honoured and served Him in our play, as well as in our work? Have we so believed in His power and in His presence everywhere, as to have a feeling within us that His Eye is upon us at all times? These are the kind of questions that Mr. Dilwyn puts to us, and by this means he not only says things about our duties, which we should not have thought of otherwise, but he somehow says them in such a way that it is impossible to help thinking of them afterwards, and trying to follow his advice; for if there be one thing which he reminds us of more than another, it is that when once we have been taught our duty, we can never be again as if we had not known it; *that knowledge without obedience is the most perilous of all possessions*; and he tells us almost every day that to have a mind full of light, and a heart full of darkness, is the most dreadful condition in which a person can be."

Edward Smith spoke with great earnestness

because he knew but too well by past experience what was the leading error in Sharp's character, and he had not forgotten another piece of advice which he had frequently heard from Mr. Dilwyn's lips, namely, that if we fail to avail ourselves of any opportunity that may occur to us of warning our friends of the sins into which we see them fall, we not only incur guilt ourselves, but may perhaps deprive them of a last chance of being recalled from the evil of their ways.

"I have often," thought Smith within himself, "heard Mr. Dilwyn tell Luke of his faults, and the danger of thinking that cleverness would make up for all his other defects, and now it would seem that he is at a place where cleverness is made more of than any other quality, so he has no chance but to become worse instead of better. I fear he won't mind me if I do say anything to him, but at any rate I shall not then have it on my mind that I did not do all in my power to be of use to him." It was with this feeling that Edward spoke in the manner which has been recorded above.

And happy would it have been for Luke if he would have reflected on what was so kindly and delicately said. It might have been a turning point in his life, and have saved us the recital of a melancholy, though not unprofitable tale.

Luke, however, was too full of self-confidence, had too high an opinion of his own judgment and knowledge of the world in comparison with Edward Smith's, had too great a contempt for the lessons of the village-school, and too entire a conviction of the superiority of a great town like Birdsley, and of the judiciousness of those who praised his own cleverness, to have any doubts or misgivings about himself and his future prospects. And so, though he was struck and startled at the moment by some of the things which Smith had said, as being very unlike what everybody else said to him, he felt more offended than pleased, broke off the conversation, and determined in his own mind not to have any more discussions with such a "prejudiced" person.

Poor fellow, he might have spared himself

the determination. The opportunity was never again afforded him. When God sees that we are resolute in not availing ourselves of the benefits which He puts within our reach, He not only does not increase them, but sooner or later withdraws those which He has already bestowed. "Take heed," said our Blessed Lord to His disciples, "how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

It had been understood by Luke that he was only to stay at Birdsley for a year, and that then his father would either take him home to live with him, or get him a clerk's place in some office. This was the height of Luke's ambition. He saw many of the clerks employed in the manufactories at Birdsley dressed very smart on Sundays, with bright-coloured waistcoats, and stocks, and frock-coats, and glossy silk hats set rather on one side. And some of them he had seen occasionally accoutred like sportsmen, driving out of the town in gigs, followed, perhaps, by

a bull-dog, and had even heard of them taking guns with them, and of their having a match at the stupidest and cruelest of all those things which are misnamed *sports*,—pigeon-shooting. And others had been his admiration as they strutted and swaggered up and down the High Street, smoking cigars, talking and laughing very loud, and staring decent people out of countenance.

What a fine thing it must be, thought Luke, to be a clerk! And how much money they must earn to enable them to dress so well! What lucky fellows they are! What happy lives they must lead! But Luke, like many another, was herein forming a judgment upon a knowledge of only half the truth. True, the clothes were very smart, but were they all paid for? And had there been no pinching of the inside in order to find funds for so smartening the outside? And though they were very fine on Sundays, was their situation equally enviable on the other six days of the week?

Ah, Luke had never thought about *that*; he was at school, and occupied himself from



Monday to Saturday, so he knew nothing about the clerks. If he had,—if he had counted their long hours of confinement, and the dull drudgery in which they were employed, and the close, dark offices in which they were buried through many a bright summer's day, and the strict rules which they were compelled to obey, and the scanty pay which, after all, they received,—Luke might have come to the conclusion that all is not gold which glitters.

And more than this, if Luke could have changed places with some of those young men whose gay attire, and swaggering gait, and noisy laugh had most attracted his attention, he would have found that, in spite of all their pretences, they were not happy, and that they were looked down upon by their employers, and that not one in fifty of them would ever be anything better than what they were at present; and that indulgence in idleness, and the love of display, would lead many of them from one bad habit to another, till profligacy brought on loss of character, and loss of character brought on poverty, and poverty, disease, and disease an early grave.

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The objects of Luke's envy were in sight, those whom he ought to have wished to follow were out of sight. The really worthy and respectable members of the profession, although after a hard week's toil they were as glad to avail themselves of the Sunday's cessation from business as their more thoughtless brethren, did not turn the Christian's Day of Rest into a day of sin. They made it a day of rest, not of idleness; of calm sober happiness, not of worldly pleasure. They were glad of repose, and they knew that the mind never finds such healthy repose as when the world is shut out. They knew that for six days in the week they were obliged to think more of their worldly calling than of God, and so on the first day of each week they were glad to avail themselves of the opportunity then afforded them of begging His blessing on themselves and their labours, by joining in His public worship.

Did such persons enjoy their Christian Sabbath less because they endeavoured thereon to do their duty to God? Were they less happy because they had the approving testimony of

a good conscience? Could they find no pleasure in that day without lying in bed till noon, and dressing above their rank, and imitating the vices of wealthier persons, and, as one may say, wearing their follies when they had done with them, as if they were so many cast off clothes? Ask them, and you will find that to such persons the chief happiness of the Lord's Day is, that they can give up themselves to His service without interruption, and that the whole day, from dawn to night, can be hallowed and sanctified unto Him, that His Law may be in the heart, His praises on the lips, His promises and mercies continually in the mind.

Ask such persons, and they will tell you that they are never so happy as when, at the close of the Lord's day, they feel that, allowance being made for human infirmity, they have spent it in such a manner as is pleasing in God's sight.

But Luke had no heart for what he would have thought such a dull, wearisome, cheerless way of spending Sunday. And to him, no doubt, a Sunday so spent would have been

dull, wearisome, and cheerless. When we have wandered from the path of duty, God never allows us to find the return to it a pleasant and easy thing at first, and the further we wander the greater is the difficulty of returning at all, the more numerous the obstacles, the more oppressive the discouragements. It is thus that God tests our sincerity, and tries our hearts whether we are in earnest with Him or no. Yet if He sees us resolutely set on retracing our steps, He gradually renders the road less rugged, and the further we advance the more easy it becomes to us, though it is never made as smooth to us again as it once was before we quitted it.

Luke would have found no pleasure in a well-spent Sunday, because he had been too long used on that day to "do his own way, and find his own pleasure, and speak his own words," instead of devoting it all to God, as at his Baptism he had promised. But if in spite of difficulties, and disinclination, and perhaps the ridicule of bad companions, he had steadily determined to keep the Fourth Commandment to the best of his power, he

would have found that his former repugnance to a right observance of the Lord's Day was gradually melting away, and, in the course of time, would have been led to confess, that till he spent it as a christian should do, he had no conception of its rest, and peace, and blessedness.

But, as has been said, Luke had no heart for that one thing on which his happiness in time and in eternity depended. Fully as he had been taught to understand the nature of the vows which had been made in his name in his baptism, he somehow contrived to persuade himself that nothing very difficult was involved in the promise to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; and that in spite of the threat that, "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished," he should do very well at last if he was no worse than others. Perhaps if he had not had the bad example of his father before him he might have been different. Let us hope so; but at the same time let us remember, with respect to ourselves, that a bad example is no excuse for those who are not in ignorance of their duty.

Luke's father was a man who, as his subsequent history proved, must have been altogether without the fear of God. Luke had been too carefully taught while under Mr. Dilwyn's care not to have some religious feelings, but he smothered them. The good seed fell among thorns and was choked. He did not go so far as to think religion a matter of no consequence; but he put it away from him for the present. It would be time enough to turn to it when he should be sick, and old, and had nothing else to think about. Youth, he persuaded himself, was made for other things, and so all his thought was how he should soon be a man, and be, in a great measure, his own master, and make his way in the world, and do things which as yet he had no opportunity of doing, and for their ability to do which he now so much envied others.

With such feelings it was no slight vexation and disappointment to him to find that his father seemed by no means eager to make any arrangements about taking him from Birdsley school. To every scheme which Luke suggested there was still the same objection

made. It would be so expensive. His outfit would cost so much; or Mr. So-and-so would require such a large premium. Did the boy think that money was as plenty as blackberries?

No, the boy did not think that; but he believed, as many others did, that his father was the richest man in the parish, that all his speculations were successful, that he was making money almost as fast as he could count it. And was it not natural to think so, when Jerry Smith was always boasting of his luck, and inviting all his neighbours,—everybody who had saved a little money in trade or in service,—to bring him their hard-won earnings, and let him vest their little capital in the grand Welsh slate quarries at Llanllwnidwrn (or some such unpronounceable name), whereby they would get twelve per cent., instead of three, which was all the Savings Bank would give them?

And yet there were things, too, which Luke's observant, watchful eye detected, and which puzzled him. Sometimes after boasting to a neighbour of his success, Jerry Sharp

would come home and throw himself into a chair, and sit moodily over the fire for hours without speaking. And latterly, he would drink more than he used to do,—gin and brandy,—and say he needed them to keep up his spirits. And when Luke offered to assist him with making up the books, he would not allow him to touch them, or look at them. And he grew more and more cross and ill-tempered every day. The only thing that seemed to give him any satisfaction was when people came in to pay their Christmas bills. Yet some of these customers, especially those who had put their money in his hands for investment, he seemed to shrink from, as if he was afraid of their speaking to him. He looked at them askance, and quailed if their full glance met his eyes.

It was very odd. Luke did not know what to make of it. And odder still when Luke began to see that his father avoided talking to him as usual, that he seemed as much afraid of him as of the neighbours.

“What are you staring at me for?” asked Jerry Sharp, at length, in a fierce offended



tone, when he made his appearance one morning, later than usual, and with such pale, haggard looks, that it was evident he could not have had a wink of sleep.

"I beg your pardon, father, I was afraid you were ill."

"Ill!" exclaimed Jerry, with an oath, "what should make you think I am ill? and if I am, what business is it of your's?"

"None, father, only . . . ."

"Only what?"

"I was afraid if you were not ill in body, you had something to make you uneasy in mind."

"Who said I was uneasy in mind? who told you so? answer me directly, or . . . ." and striking the table with his clenched fist, he left the alternative unexpressed, but not uncomprehended.

Luke had not, could not have, anything like filial respect; his father's character prevented this; but he had great fear of him, and he was quite terrified with the violence of his parent's manner, and the livid hue, and horrible expression of his countenance.

He answered at once that he had never heard any one make a remark on the subject.

“Then mind your own business; and hold you tongue about what has passed between us now, if you don’t wish me to be the death of you. And hark ye, you are to go back to Birdsley the first thing to-morrow morning. You’ve been idling at home long enough: it’s time you should be back at school.”

And to Birdsley Luke departed, for he saw that any further discussion with his father was out of the question.

In a week’s time the mystery was solved. On Saturday Jerry Sharp left Yateshull, telling his foreman that he should not be home before Monday night, as he had business at Birmingham. Monday passed, and Tuesday, and Wednesday, but no Jerry Sharp appeared.

On Thursday came a rumour that the Sheriff’s officers were in possession of the Mill at Amworth. The report had hardly reached Yateshull before the police were at his premises there. And then the truth came out. The Welsh slate-quarry affair had been a gambling speculation of the most nefarious

kind, and Jerry Sharp and some others having collected vast sums of money through the credulity of those who trusted them, had put the cash into their own pockets and fled the country. Nor, on inquiry, did it turn out that his assets at Yateshull and elsewhere were sufficient to pay a penny in the pound. From the poor servant maid who had lent him her five sovereigns, to the foolish farmer who had lent him five hundred for investment in the slate-mines, not one of his creditors had the remotest chance of being repaid. And the worst of it was, that for the most part the sufferers were persons whom their losses brought to the greatest state of distress,—widows, fatherless children, aged labourers, servants too old for service, small shopkeepers, and the like. These were his victims. Allured by the foolish hope of gaining greater interest for their money than could be got elsewhere, knowing nothing of the wickedness of the share-market, as it is called, they were led into a snare from which there was no escape, and only discovered their error when it was too late to retrieve it.

Yet such things are happening every day, and in spite of warnings of every kind, people *will* go blindfold into ruin. Never, surely, has covetousness eaten so deeply into the heart of any nation as it has into our's. It matters not how wild or how wicked a speculation be, if only it offers a large interest on the money invested, thousands will be found ready to embark in it, and to listen to the suggestions of any plausible rogue who, like Jerry Sharp, endeavours to persuade them that he has no object so much at heart as their welfare.

It is needless to say that the officers were unsuccessful in their search. Sharp and his companions had laid their plans so cleverly that they were out of reach of pursuit before the alarm was given. Some said they fled to America, others to Australia, but nothing certain was known, they were never seen again.

And the last thing that poor Luke ever heard of his father was a letter with the Liverpool post mark, which he received at Birdsley on the fatal Thursday morning. It ran in these words :

“ Son Luke,

The times are too hard for men to live in them honestly ; so I have been compelled to think of myself before others, and to take care of Number One. I advise you to do the same, as I can now help you no further ; and you had better not think about me, for I can't say where you are likely to find me. You must shift for yourself ; you are old enough. I had to make my start in life when I was younger than you, and without a shilling ; you are a scholar, and no doubt will find friends. I dare say your uncle Atkins will take you into his shop. Tell him I'm sorry I can't pay his last bill. I wish you better luck than has fallen to me. So no more,

From your unfortunate

Father,

J. S.”



THUS the mystery was solved, and all that had seemed strange to Luke in his father's recent conduct became now intelligible enough. The unhappy boy had gone to school as usual that morning, but had hardly been there an hour before a policeman entered the room, spoke a few words to Mr. Hampden, and then called Luke to follow him. At the door he found his uncle Atkins, who having been himself subjected to a visit from the police, and to an examination respecting his brother-in-law's flight, of which he was wholly ignorant, had, on the delivery of the letter at his house,

recognized Jerry's handwriting, and immediately handed it over to the constable.

"From whom is that letter?" asked the policeman as he put it into Luke's hands. "Do you know the writing?"

"Oh yes," answered Luke, staring at his uncle's perturbed countenance, "It is my father's."

"Look at the post mark," continued Irons, watching the expression of Luke's features intently, and pointing to the word "Liverpool," "What is your father doing at Liverpool?"

"I don't know, Sir," said Luke.

"Open the letter;—there, don't break the seal, but take out your knife and cut the paper."

Luke did as he was bidden.

"Now read it."

Luke read, and paused, and looked first at his uncle, and then at the policeman, and then turned to the letter again; then he grew deadly pale, and in a tone of the most evident and unfeigned alarm exclaimed, "Oh, uncle, uncle, what has happened?"

Constable Irons took the letter out of the

boy's hands, and read it. "I thought as much," said he, and held it out for Mr. Atkins' perusal.

"What a scoundrel! and *my* money too as well as other folks'! But this boy knows nothing."

The policeman nodded, and then, instead of returning the letter to the owner, put it into his pocket and walked off.

"Oh, sir, do give me back my letter."

"Sorry to say that it is out of my power at present, young man: but you shall have it safe enough in a day or two."

"Oh, uncle, uncle, what is the matter?" exclaimed the poor boy with the tears running down his cheeks.

"Ask Mr. Irons," replied grocer Atkins, hesitating.

"What is it, sir?" said Luke appealing to the constable.

"Go home with your uncle, and he will tell you," replied the cautious official of the law.

"Your father's a bad man, Luke," observed Atkins, "he has ruined hundreds."

"He has '*done*' everybody, swindled them,



victimized them, and now he has fled the country," said Irons.

"He deserves to be hanged," ejaculated the grocer.

"He will be hanged some day," responded the policeman.

"He will be the cause of half-a-dozen bankruptcies in this place," said the tradesman, beginning to count with his fingers.

"A hundred pounds reward!" muttered Irons, "how fond people are of throwing good money after bad! Well, I'd give a trifle to get on the right scent, and know what is become of him."

"I'm sure I'd give a trifle," exclaimed Atkins, suddenly turning with a look of reproach at poor sobbing Luke, "to know what's to become of *you*. Why you're a beggar. The very clothes on your back are not your own."

"Oh, uncle Atkins," said the boy once more, "do tell me what has happened."

And then, as they walked homeward, the grocer made Luke acquainted with his father's villainies so far as they had then been discovered; and when he got home he found his shop crowded with people, some bewailing

their losses, and some almost frantic with rage at having been so imposed upon. And when they saw Luke they seemed as if they would have liked to tear him to pieces.

"The young thief!" cried one.

"The beggar's brat!" exclaimed another.

"Who's to pay for his smart jacket?" asked a third.

"Oh, that will come out of our pockets," said a fourth.

"No, it will never be paid for at all," sneered a fifth.

"Where's your father, you young rascal?" shouted two or three together.

Luke hurried past them, rushed up stairs into a room at the back of the house, threw himself into a chair, and there sat stunned and stupified for hours. He was a beggar, he was without a home, what was to become of him? These were the thoughts which occupied his mind, and brooding on them, he worked himself up into such a fury, that perhaps among the crowd in the shop below there was not one who felt such rage and bitter indignation against his father as he did. Shame and sorrow for a parent's transgression were lost in

the contemplation of his own personal inconvenience, and the mortifications to which he would in all likelihood be exposed, and of which he had already had such a painful sample.

Thus, though a heavy trial had been sent him, his mind was in no state to receive it, and it fell upon him, as under such circumstances trials invariably do, with accumulated bitterness. Had he stored up any of the many lessons on this subject which he had received while at Yateshull, his misfortune might have proved a blessing to him by suggesting to him the thought that it was in his power to secure the favour and protection of One Friend,—the Unchanging, and Unchangeable, Who will never leave or forsake those who love Him, and put their trust in Him; of Whom the Psalmist, Holy David, saith, “When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up;” yea, Who Himself hath said as concerning His people, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, but I will not forget thee.”

But now, as heretofore, unhappy Luke turned his thoughts to anything rather than religion: he said no prayer, uttered not so much as one ejaculation to God to have pity on him, and help him, but sate in moody sullenness bewailing his hard fate, and murmuring against the cruelty of his unnatural parent.

He was roused by hearing the clock in an adjoining factory strike three. Hours, then, had passed away, the family meal was over, and nobody had troubled their heads to ask after him, or send for him. This was a sample of what he was to expect. "Now I am a beggar," thought he, "nobody cares what becomes of me; while my father was supposed to be rich, nobody could do enough for me!" Alas! the reflection never occurred to him that if such were the case, a capricious world, and uncertain riches, were evil things to trust to! Luke's thoughts ran in another channel: pride was the form which the tempter now assumed, and Luke's impulse was to go down stairs, upbraid his uncle for his unfeeling conduct towards him, and then leave the house, and wander about, and starve,

and die, rather than be under obligations to anybody.

Accordingly he went down stairs: his uncle was not in the parlour, nor in the shop, and Barney Ford, the shopman, said he didn't know where he was, unless he was up at the police station. And Barney said this in a tone which was intended to shew that he thought he was rather demeaning himself by speaking to Luke at all.

Luke drew his cap over his face, and walked out into the street. He was very hungry, and would have been thankful for even a dry crust, but he had no money, and he was too proud to ask for a piece of bread in his uncle's house.

He walked on, and being pretty well known in the town, he soon found himself exposed to the same sort of salutations as those which he had experienced earlier in the day. He became quite cowed and frightened, and was half inclined to run back to the house he had quitted: but his pride checked him. Then he reflected that if he could but once get out of the town he should not be liable to molestation.

But whither should he go? Once he thought of turning his steps towards Yates-hull, but his fears immediately suggested to him that to go there would be only to expose himself to the same kind of treatment as that from which he was endeavouring to escape. And besides, who was there who was likely to be disposed to assist him? The neighbours, with whom he was best acquainted, were precisely those persons whom his father's dishonesty had most deeply injured. To be sure there were Mr. Warlingham, and Mr. Dilwyn, and two or three of his old school-fellows, whom he felt would not turn their backs on him, but his pride checked him once more. He could not make up his mind to go to them. The two former he could not help respecting, but he disliked them, because, as he had succeeded in persuading himself, he was sure they were prejudiced against him; and as to the latter, he was secretly conscious of having at one time given himself so many airs as the richest, and cleverest boy in the school, that he could not bear the thought of affording them a triumph by presenting himself before them in poverty and disgrace. He

little knew the persons whom he thus shrunk from meeting; or rather, perhaps, he judged of them by himself, and of what he might have done in his days of success. Not one of them but would have comforted and assisted him to the best of their power; and had he so gone, and been guided by the advice he would then have received, his whole character might have been changed, and his future career have been one of honourable exertion, and Christian obedience.

But no, he would not go to Yateshull. The temptation of pride was strong; and he made no effort to resist it, and so once more he lost an opportunity which, when lost, could never be recalled; and, as often happens, his sin and his punishment went hand in hand; the pride which he was indulging brought him forthwith not imaginary evil, but real humiliations,—humiliations of the very kind which (if he had received them in a right spirit) would have been most wholesome for him, but which he was most anxious to escape.

It was while he was hurrying on to the nearest road out of the town, that he found

himself approaching the school which he entered the same morning with such different feelings to those which now oppressed him. The sight instantly recalled the words of his father's letter,—“You are a scholar, and no doubt will find friends.”

A gleam of hope seemed to come over him : he felt he was “a scholar,” and a clever one too ; he had done credit to the Birdsley school, and to “the new system,” and to Mr. Hampden. He would go to Mr. Hampden ; he felt confident in Mr. Hampden's ability and willingness to help him.

And so to Mr. Hampden he went ; but he might as well have stayed away. Not that Mr. Hampden repulsed him, or said one unkind word to him, but there was something in him which made Luke feel directly that he was not a person to go to in time of need. He expressed great sorrow for him and so forth, but there he stopped short. There was nothing generous about him, he was all outside, and there was no getting beneath the surface,—to his heart. Smooth, and smug, and comfortable, and well-to-do in the world,



it was as if he had resolved never to allow himself to be interested in other people's affairs, or plagued with their concerns, or to have his ease broken in upon, or his feelings distressed by the troubles of his neighbours. He was caution itself, seemed always afraid to commit himself, and as if the chief object of his life was so to qualify all he said as that he should never be chargeable with having expressed an opinion, or given a promise. In short he was just the man for his office,—that office being “to teach morality without religion, and religion without a creed,” or in other words, to teach men to be Christians, by suppressing the truths of Christianity.

And so when Luke, with broken voice, and streaming eyes, besought him to befriend him, and use his influence to get him some situation, Mr. Hampden only wished that his power was equal to his good-will, said that it was a matter of the greatest pain to him that, as he had no influence, he could be of no use to Luke, regretted that, under present circumstances, he could not feel himself justified in holding out hopes that he would be able to

serve him in any way, assured him of the satisfaction he should have in hearing he was well provided for, opened the house door for him, and wished him a good afternoon, having never so much as asked him to sit down, or offered him a mouthful of food, though he must have seen well enough the poor boy's exhausted condition. "A sharp lad that," muttered the cautious teacher to himself, as he returned to his tea, "it's a pity that misfortune has come upon him. How he is to get an honest livelihood, I don't see; and if he *does* turn rogue, he will be a great one, like his father; I can't think why it is that useful knowledge is so often turned to bad account. They tell me that that Jerry Sharp had a wonderful head for figures,—and a pretty purpose he has turned his skill to!"

Another ring at the door-bell. "Dear me!" exclaimed the master in a tone of extreme surprise unmingled with pleasure, "*you* here again? What has brought you back? You should have said anything you had to say at once, and not have brought me here a second time. I am particularly busy, and, and . . ."

but here Mr. Hampden stopped short; it struck him that it would be imprudent to let out that the tea was made, and the muffin was growing cold.

"Well, what is it? he asked sharply, after a pause.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I am very sorry to have troubled you, sir," said Luke more meekly than was his wont, "but I wished to know whether, if I could hear of a clerk's place anywhere, I might give your name as a reference?"

"*My* name, young man? goodness, gracious me! whatever are you thinking of? By no manner of means," exclaimed the man of caution, "I wonder how you could ask such a thing, especially after all that has happened. I make it a rule never to stand surety for anybody, in any way. And least of all could I do it for you, whose father . . ."

"Oh, sir, I did not mean that. I only wished to refer to you for my character."

"Dear, dear! what means have I of knowing your character? I never trouble my head about you out of school-hours."

Even Luke could not fail to be struck with the contrast which this speech suggested to his mind between Mr. Hampden, and "old Dilwyn," whose whole soul was wrapped up in his scholars, and whose thoughts were as much occupied with them, and his eye almost as much over them when they were at their play, as when they were at their work.

"Perhaps you could speak as to my ability in the way of penmanship and casting accounts, and say that I am a fair scholar."

"Why yes," replied the master of Birdsley school, "I do not immediately see any objection to my doing that, though perhaps it is better in these cases not to speak positively. Let me know if you hear of anything likely to suit, and I will consider of it. Of course I don't mean to deny your ability, but it does not do for a person in my situation to commit himself. But, my young friend, I must give one caution, don't allow yourself to build too much upon your scholarship. Everybody is a good writer and accountant now-a-days. These new schools of our's have done so much for the people, that there is quite a glut

of knowledge in the market. Learning is a drug; reading, writing, and arithmetic are like the air we breathe, we must *all* have it or die. Don't count too much on your scholarship, young man. Good evening."

And the philosopher returned to his muffin, and the scholar to the high road. Here was the end of his father's confident expectation that *as* he was a scholar, he would be sure to find friends. If one who knew him had discouraged him so deeply, what could he expect from strangers?

What was to be his next step? Where was he to go? To whom was he to apply? His natural protector had deserted him; his uncle's roof he had quitted; and, so far as he knew, he had not a kinsman in the world. Evening was drawing on. Hungry, and thirsty, and weary, where was he to go for relief? He knew not. "And it matters not," said he bitterly, "so that I can get out of this place. I suppose I shall starve, and the sooner I starve, the sooner it will be over."

He knew not what he was talking about. He had never in his life known what it was to

be without a sufficiency of food, and the cravings of hunger which he now felt were no more than many of the poor children at Birdsley were in the habit of experiencing every day of their lives. And then to speak as if it would be a blessing to him if he were dead! How little could he have thought of the real nature of that change which would bring him at once before God, with so many unrepented sins, and so many unchastened tempers to answer for!

It was a cold wintry afternoon; heavy lead-coloured clouds covered the face of the sky, and beneath them white, flaky masses of vapour,—the sure forerunner of a deep snow. The wind was eddying about from one point to the other in sudden gusts,—the herald of the storm which would set in at sunset: but still Luke continued to walk onward.

The road lay across a flat, dreary moor. Lonesome and uninviting the prospect must have been even in former times, when the eye could rest on nothing but a wide expanse of heath, and a distance of low round-headed hills, skirting the horizon like a wall. But

when the gorse and ling were in flower, and the lark was carolling in the sky above, and a pure, fresh, healthy air was blowing, even that solitary heath had its charms for those who accustom themselves to track out in all God's works the evidences of His wisdom, and His love.

But beneath the surface of that sterile soil the earth was rich in mineral treasures. And shaft after shaft had been sunk, till the whole moor was honey-combed with coal and iron mines. Then, indeed, the land became a dreary waste. Whimsies with their tall chimnies, and dome-like boilers, and ever-moving cranks and fly-wheels; furnaces vomiting forth flames and clouds of murky smoke; heaps of coal in process of coking, piles of ironstone calcining; forges and pit-banks; long tracks of blackened pathway intersecting each other in all directions; canals crossing each other at various levels; innumerable shapeless mounds of the refuse of the mines, or of dross from the blast-furnaces; shallow stagnant ponds; and an atmosphere loaded with soot and smoke,—these were the sights

which now met the eye of the traveller. Scarce a blade of grass was to be seen even in the height of summer, no insect gladdened the air, no bird poured forth its song; it was as if a universal blight and poison had pervaded the atmosphere, as if it had been decreed that those scenes, in which the sufferings of many are ministering to the covetousness of the few, should ever bear upon them some outward and visible sign of being marked by the curse of God.

And stretching away for miles and miles as far as that miserable mining district extended, the high road presented the same objects on the right hand and on the left; the only variation being that now and then the traveller entered a huge, overgrown, town-like village, with hundreds of low dilapidated dwellings, not built in streets, but looking as though they had been thrown down at random, all of the same size and shape, yet most of them leaning in one direction or another,—with cracks and settlements in the walls, and with buttresses supporting them where most out of the perpendicular,—the inclination being the result of



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what are thereabouts called "swags,"—that is, the sinking of the ground into old workings,—all beneath the surface being hollow and perforated through and through. These are the dwellings of the miners, nail-makers, and other poor mechanics.

In other spots, where the country is more open, clusters of hovels, hatches, and den-like workshops and smithies, with two or three beer-houses, near a whimsey, on one side or other of the road, were the tokens of that vast, swarming population which were at work under ground.

Along this road Luke proceeded till he had nearly reached Cinder Hill, the nearest hamlet to Birdsley, and about a couple of miles from it, when just as he approached the site of two or three ruined hovels at the outskirts, his attention was roused by hearing some one shouting to him. He looked up and saw two well-dressed men coming from the opposite direction, one of whom was vainly attempting to catch his hat which had been blown off his head by one of the sudden gusts of wind. The hat was borne towards Luke, but in such a

manner that unless he was able to interpose, it would be speedily deposited in one of the ponds by the road side. Luke immediately dashed forward, and caught the hat just as it was bounding into the water.

He ran with it to the fat, breathless, old gentleman who had lost it, and whom he immediately recognized as Mr. Grinderstone,—the head partner in the foundry of Grinderstone and Slag, who was one of the greatest men at Birdsley, and who in that capacity had presided at the Christmas Examination, and bestowed the prizes at the Birdsley school. Luke's heart bounded within him; he knew he had received the head prize, and a very high encomium had been passed on his talents by this very Mr. Grinderstone, who had called him "a rising youth." Luke felt as if he was at any rate now sure of a friend.

"Thank ye, my boy, thank ye," gasped the old gentleman, as soon as he was able to speak, "it's a new hat, and I.... hey, why, hey?"

And here Mr. Grinderstone stopped short, for in the act of putting his hand into his pocket for a few odd halfpence, it suddenly

occurred to him that Luke's face was familiar to him, and at the same time he judged from his dress, that if he gave anything at all (and Mr. Grinderstone was not held to be overfond of giving), it must be something more than the two-pence-halfpenny in the bit of blue paper which he had just received at the shop. So Mr. Grinderstone paused to take breath and consider.

"Hey?" he continued, as Luke took off his cap to him, "why you're the boy, ar'nt you, up at the what-d'ye-call-it yonder?"

"The Birdsley school, sir."

"Yes, yes, that I gave what-d'ye-call-him's thingumbobs to?"

"Trotter's Physics," answered Luke, assisting the memory of his still breathless patron; "Yes, sir."

"Very promising boy, Slag," observed Mr. Grinderstone, addressing his companion.

"What's his name?" asked Mr. Slag, for want of something better to say.

"Sharp, sir, Luke Sharp," answered the person most interested in the inquiry.

"No relation, I hope, to Sharp of Amworth mill."

"I am his son, sir," replied the boy blushing deeply.

"Sad affair, indeed, that slate-quarry business," observed Mr. Grinderstone, beginning once more to feel for the halfpence. "But I think you lived with somebody at Birdsley,—not with your father."

"With my mother's brother, Mr. Atkins the grocer."

"Well, and I suppose he'll be a parent to you now, won't he?"

There was something in this blunt, matter-of-fact way of cross-questioning which Luke did not know how to meet. He stammered, and hesitated, and at last said that he had left his uncle, and was looking out for a situation.

"Left your uncle, have you?" asked Mr. Slag, "I hope you don't mean that he turned you out of doors in consequence of your father's offence."

"Oh no, sir!" answered Luke hastily.

"Then why have you left him?" asked Grinderstone and Slag in one breath.

They proposed a question which, strange to say, up to this moment, Luke had never pro-

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not exercise upon him, till poor Jem got paler and paler, and thinner and thinner, and weaker and weaker, and more and more ragged ; but still he was kept to his toil early and late, and early and late his cries and screams were heard when Tony was flogging him with the nail-wire. And then," continued Mr. Slag, "he was covered with sores; and then he grew quite crippled, so that he could be of no use to Tony ; and then he disappeared. Tony said he had run away. And the neighbours wondered how a tottering cripple, whose master's eye was never off him, could run away. But the boy had no friends to inquire after him, and when the neighbours asked why Dwale himself made no search for him, he replied that the boy wasn't worth his salt, that he could not afford to keep him doing nothing, and, as it were, eating his own head off, and so he was glad to be quit of him."

"The neighbours had their own thoughts, notwithstanding," observed Mr. Grinderstone.

"Of course," said Slag, "but they did not choose to meddle or make. Tony Dwale

was an ill man to quarrel with. So the talk soon ceased, and Jem the Runaway, was nearly forgotten at the end of ten or fifteen years, when Dwale died. He had a miserable end. He was seized with a fit that took away the use of his limbs, and nobody being near him when he fell, he was slowly roasted to death on his own forge. Those who saw the corpse thought from its appearance, and the small quantity of fuel, that he must have been burning and dying, dying and burning for hours."

"Ah," interposed Grinderstone, "he had been fighting fire all his life, and it beat him at last."

"Are you listening, boy, to what I say?" inquired Slag, turning to Luke. "Yes, I see you are. Well, what with the damage it received from the fire, and what with the bad name it had gotten from Tony's doings, nobody cared to hire his house, so it went to ruin, and a few years back was pulled down, at least in part, for you see that some of the wall is standing yet. Now look at that mound by the window-place. Underneath that was the

back cellar, and there, while the men were working, they found the skeleton of a boy. 'That's old Tony's prentice as was missing!' 'That's poor Jem the Runaway,' cried some of the old folks who happened to be standing by; and I suppose it was; at least there was a mark on it that stamped it for a piece of old Tony's handiwork, for, just by the right ear, a nail had been driven into the skull, and there it was still sticking."

"Oh sir," exclaimed Luke in horror, "and what did those who made the discovery do?"

"Do?" replied Mr. Slag, "the bones were shovelled into a wheel-barrow, carried away, and flung into the lane there, to mend the road, or to be kicked about, just as it might happen.\* They're a rough set that live hereabouts; but not so bad now-a-days as old Tony Dwale, I dare say; and even if they are, you seem a strong, healthy chap, with more spirit belike than Jem the Runaway lad. I'm told trade is pretty good, and they're in want

\* See a similar story in the Report already referred to. Evidence No 268.

of hands. You had better go and try your luck with them. Good night, my boy."

And Mr. Slag laid hold of Mr. Grinderstone's arm, and made as though he were about to hurry homewards, without taking any more thought about Luke.

Hungry, thirsty, weary, miserable, terrified, Luke saw the two gentlemen turn their backs on him with the feeling of despair with which a drowning man sees the plank, which he is struggling to gain hold of, caught by a current and swung out of his reach.

"Oh, gentlemen," he exclaimed, following them, and keeping close at their side, "pray have pity on me."

"Dear me," said Mr. Slag, "I'm afraid you are a very troublesome sort of person. I've given you some advice; what more would you have?"

"Don't stand in my way," ejaculated Mr. Grinderstone, falling at once into what he saw must be his partner's object; for though tainted by the greedy, money-getting spirit of the times, he was, in many respects, a kind-hearted man. "Don't follow us in that man-

ner; don't push up so closely at my side; take care what you are about. It is my duty to correct rogues and vagabonds. I shall send a constable after you."

"Oh, gentlemen, be a friend to me," cried Luke with all the importunity of despair.

"Dear me!" replied Mr. Slag, "what claim have you upon us? We know nothing about you."

"Mr. Grinderstone does, indeed he does; only ask him."

"I know I had to present you with a book at the school yonder; but I did the same to two or three score besides. You don't mean to build upon that, do you? You don't expect me to stand sponsor for all the ragga-muffins that our silly committee, with their precious folly, give sixpenny books to, do you?"

"No, sir, but you praised me more than the others," said Luke with failing heart, but determined, if possible, not to lose his last chance.

"I told you you were a promising boy, but what of that? Half the youths that

come to be transported or hanged were promising lads at some time or other. They shewed talent and sharpness which gave a promise that they could do something to be talked of by-and-by; and so they *are* talked about, but not for good, but evil. You're a clever school-boy, but what of that? It will be only so much the worse for you, and in the end make a greater rogue of you, unless you have conduct as well as cleverness, and character as well as talent. And it is clear, by your own shewing, and by your being here at this moment, that you have neither conduct nor character. No, I can do nothing for you," said Mr. Grinderstone.

"Nor I," said Mr. Slag.

Luke fell back, buried his face in his hands, and turned away in despair.

The gentlemen proceeded a few yards; not many certainly, but they went far enough to make Luke feel that he was alone in the world, quite helpless and friendless.

Then Mr. Grinderstone looked round and shouted after him, "Hillo, where are you skulking away to?"



"I don't know, sir," replied Luke rejoining them once more.

"Why don't you go back to your uncle ? and beg his pardon, and tell him what an ass you have been, and say how much you're ashamed of yourself, and express your readiness to do anything he bids you, by which you may gain an honest livelihood ?"

"I don't like. . . . I mean I'm afraid to do that," replied Luke, in whose heart pride was still battling to retain its ground.

"Now, I'll tell you what," said Mr. Grinderstone, "I am not going to catch my death of cold by standing in a snow-storm to argue you out of your folly ; but I shan't take any more nonsense. So, if you please, you'll just keep five yards in advance of me and Mr. Slag, and if I see you attempting to make your escape, I'll give you such a thrashing as no man but Tony Dwale ever gave a runaway before."

There was something so determined in Mr. Grinderstone's manner, that Luke, under any circumstances, would have been afraid not to obey ; but situated as he was, he felt it a

comfort not to be left to himself. A night passed in the Birdsley cage would be far preferable to one on Birdsley Moor in a snow-storm. So the three passed along at a rapid pace, till they entered the town, and then Luke was bidden to lead the way to his uncle's.

Mr. Atkins had just returned home. He had been out on business ever since the morning, and of course knew nothing of Luke's wanderings. If great was his surprise at finding that his nephew was missing, greater still was his amazement at having him brought back in the custody of Messrs. Grinderstone and Slag.

The latter gentlemen soon told their tale, while Luke stood by with downcast countenance, writhing under the infliction of the well deserved reproof which he received, and stung with vexation at a suppressed titter which he heard behind him, and which he knew emanated from Barney Ford, the shopman.

Mr. Atkins, a well-intentioned, industrious, plain-spoken man, though somewhat dull, and occasionally rather hasty where money

matters were concerned, could only express his wonder at Luke's folly, and his obligation to his wealthy fellow-townsmen, for bringing him back. He had always intended to do what he could for his nephew, he said, at any rate for the present. He knew it was no easy matter now-a-days to get lads into situations ; the market was overstocked ; but he was doing pretty well himself in the grocery line, and should have no objection to take Luke into the shop. He would board and lodge him, and give him five pounds a year to provide clothes.

Mr. Grinderstone said nothing could be better : it was a hundred times better than any thing Luke deserved ; and then he added, " We shall be very ready to bind him to you as apprentice, whenever you think proper to bring him before the bench. As for you, young man," he continued, " I shall be willing to forget your egregious folly, if I hear of you taking pains to retrieve the false step you have taken this day, and endeavouring, by diligence and steadiness, to make up for your ingratitude. I shall keep my eye upon

you, and if I am satisfied that you are going on well, shall not be indisposed to befriend you : but remember, I never make promises."

" And if you find you ever think yourself too clever to be a shop boy, and that you are fitter to be a clerk in a counting-house than to weigh out pepper and mustard, and so are disposed to take to your heels again, I advise you," said Mr. Slag, " not to forget the history of Tony Dwale and run-away Jem."

And then Luke was left to the companionship of his uncle, who did not reproach him, and of his conscience, which did.

As Mr. Slag had anticipated, Luke was by no means enamoured of the prospect before him. He had got so high an opinion of his own cleverness, that it had already incapacitated him from turning it to account. If he could have entered contentedly into his uncle's establishment, thankful for the opportunity afforded him of commencing life under circumstances far more favourable than, after his father's disgrace, he had any reason to expect, if he would have been satisfied to do what his

betters had done before him, that is, to work his way upwards by degrees; if he would self-learned to abate a little of his vanity and have satisfaction, by reflection on the past, all might yet have been well; he might have now commenced a career of usefulness and respectability. But all the lessons which for some time past he had been learning were calculated to make him think too highly of himself, and to set him above his rank in life. Knowledge, such as it was, he had certainly gained, but there was no sense of religion to balance it.

And "knowledge," as the Scripture warns us, is that which "puffeth up," and an education which imparts knowledge only is GOD-LESS.



## LUKE SHARP.

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Part IV.

THERE was one person to whom the permanent introduction of Luke into his uncle's business was even more distasteful than to the boy himself, and that person was Barney Ford, the shopman, who, although very much trusted by his master, was a dishonest servant, and one who lost no opportunity of enriching himself at his master's cost.

With a smooth, plausible manner, and even an appearance of openness, he was wily and cunning, and perfectly unscrupulous as to the means he used to attain his ends. Dexterous and quick-witted, he had contrived not only to insinuate himself into Mr. Atkins' confi-

dence, but on more than one occasion, when his frauds would have been probably detected by a more acute master, he contrived to lull all suspicion against himself, and to fix it upon others.

Now as this man's whole life was a series of petty acts of dishonesty, each one trifling in itself so far as the value of the article stolen was concerned, yet in the aggregate of no mean importance, and as the greater part of these acts were perpetrated in the shop during his master's absence, it was evident that the addition of a third person to the establishment would, if that person were to be constantly in the shop, and gifted with only moderate powers of observation, be a most material check and hindrance to his proceedings. And to escape detection long with such a boy as Luke at his elbow, who had all his wits about him, and who, from the circumstances of his father's trade, was by no means ignorant of the details of business, seemed altogether impossible. What course was he to pursue? This was a question, the resolution of which cost Barney many an hour of *anxious thought*.

Reflection, however, satisfied him that only two courses were open to him. He might lay aside his dishonest courses until he should have so effectually disgusted Luke with a grocer's life, as to make him seek some other occupation, and thus leave the coast clear for him once more; or else he might seduce Luke to wink at, or abet him in his nefarious designs, and thus continue his present course without interruption.

The first scheme would not be difficult of accomplishment, because it was evident that Luke had no inclination to be a grocer, and thought himself fitted for higher things. But then dishonesty had become a second nature to Barney Ford, and not knowing how long it might be before he would be able to get rid of Luke, he could not make up his mind to forego his daily profits. The second plan had its difficulties, but Barney was an acute observer of character, and he argued that where the father had shewn himself so unscrupulous, the son was not likely to have been brought up to scruples, and he had already seen enough of Luke to anticipate that his



vanity would before long bring him into necessities, and that then he would not be difficult to manage. He determined therefore to draw Luke as soon as he could into some act of dishonesty, in the conviction that from that hour he would be his master, and that by threatening him with exposure he would speedily induce him to league with him in defrauding his employer.

Alas ! how manifold are the trials to which young persons, of all ranks of life, (and perhaps those of Luke's condition more than others), are exposed on their first entrance into the world. A few, a very few years of discipline and instruction, and then they are, as it were, turned adrift on a wide and stormy sea to battle with all imaginable perils. And without a previous knowledge of the dangers that await them, and of the only safe methods by which the vessel can be managed ; without a compass to guide them in steering to the haven where they would be, what can befall them but utter shipwreck, to be dashed to pieces among breakers, or sucked in by whirlpools, or stranded upon shoals, or engulfed

by the stormy waves? From within and from without how countless are the temptations which beset the young! how innumerable and seductive the snares which Satan spreads along their path! On the one hand, the pride and wilfulness of their own hearts, their self-confidence, their vanity, their love of pleasure, and of the applause of the world, their wild unholy lusts, their fear of ridicule, their recklessness of consequences, attract them towards, and, unresisted, will lead them along the path whose end is destruction: on the other, evil companions, the bad fashions of the world, and its constant habit of calling evil good and good evil, the removal of restraints, and the absence of a parent's eye, all tend to increase the difficulties of even the well-disposed, and to render it a hard task for them to maintain their purity and integrity, and to maintain unbroken those awful,—most awful Baptismal vows, which can never be broken without extreme peril to the soul.

And such, even under the most favourable circumstances, being the dangers of youth, what shall be said of that system which sends

forth the young into the world without the only thing which can bring them safe and unharmed through their arduous course, which can alone give them strength in weakness, steadfastness in temptation, and courage to endure,—which alone will teach them to fear God and not man, that to have His favour is better than to gain the world's applause, and that to be pure and unspotted from the world is better than to have all that wealth and power, and pleasure can bestow? What shall be said of that system which aids the young in acquiring that *Knowledge*, the purchase of which cost Adam his portion in Paradise, and abstains from imbuing them with a love of that *Godliness* "*which is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.*"

But to return to our tale. There was one difficulty in Barney's way which vexed him exceedingly, for it was a difficulty of his own making. In his previous behaviour to Luke he had shewn less than his usual caution, for it was smooth-tongued Barney's way to keep well with every body, and not shew likes or

dislikes. His policy somewhat resembled that of the unjust steward in the parable; he was anxious to make all the friends he could while he had the opportunity, in order that he might secure the countenance and aid of some upon whom he might fall back if ever a day of trouble and of account should come upon him. "The sun," he would say to himself, "is on my side of the hedge now, so I will make hay while it shines." He therefore made himself as much as possible all things to all men. But so it fell out that he had not given himself the trouble to conciliate Luke, whom in his heart he thoroughly disliked.

Luke had in former times given himself offensive airs of superiority, and had spoken disparagingly in Barney's presence of such employments as his; and more than once he had complained to his uncle of something Barney had done to offend him. So it had been no small satisfaction to Ford to see the distress brought upon Luke by his father's disgrace, and as has been seen, he took the earliest possible opportunity of wounding his

pride. But his triumph was still greater when Luke himself had been brought into trouble; and his malicious laugh was one of real joy when he saw Luke standing confused and downcast in his uncle's presence, and receiving the well-deserved reproof of Mr. Grinderstone.

However, when Barney heard the turn the conversation was taking, he saw immediately that he had committed a great error; and he thought within himself that he would rather have bitten the tip of his tongue off, than have uttered a sound which had so evidently betrayed the real state of his feelings.

But what was done could not be undone. It must be his business to repair the mischief as speedily and effectually as he could; so before he retired to rest that night he went to his master, and while expressing much pity for Luke, and earnest desire to assist him in his new employment, contrived skilfully to throw in such praises of the old man's kindness and generosity towards his nephew, that Mr. Atkins assured Luke the very first thing in the morning that he had not a better friend *in the world* than Barney Ford.

And as soon as Luke commenced his duties in the shop, Barney lost no means of quietly ingratiating himself. He prudently abstained from all allusion to the past, and contented himself with a few cordial expressions of sympathy for Luke's misfortune, and regret that one who had such good prospects, and who was so capable of undertaking any office with credit to himself, and advantage to his employers, should be forced for a time,—Barney added he was confident it *could* be only for a short time,—to be in such an humble situation as himself. And then Barney sighed and said that *he* had no prospects, *he* must be content to live and die a poor shopman, but that Luke's merits were such, and his talents already so well known, that he was certain to get on in the world, and make his fortune easily.

Few people turn a deaf ear to flattery well administered; few people who love to be flattered fail, in the long-run, to like their flatterers. And such characters as Luke's are peculiarly liable to be brought under the influence of those who take the trouble to ascer-

tain and work upon their weak points. This Barney Ford knew well enough, and took advantage of it, by affecting a deference to Luke on account of his cleverness and scholarship.

The result was, that Luke first began to think Barney a very discriminating person, and one who made very sensible remarks: then, by degrees, he went on to think that he had formerly taken an unreasonable prejudice against him; and at length he was not only reconciled to him but liked him. Meanwhile, the cunning shopman aided, by his actions, the effect of his words. He saved Luke as much as he could from the more menial occupations of his employer's trade; he took all troublesome drudgery off his hands, and made things easy to him, so that at the end of six months Luke had not only got tolerably well reconciled to the shop, but had persuaded himself that he had a friend in Barney.

He little knew how Barney hated him,—hated him for his vanity, and the overbearing self-sufficiency of his manner,—but hated him worst of all for the check which he interposed

between the dishonest servant and his wicked gains. And the hatred grew more intense, because, before Luke had been long in the shop, his uncle was seized with a complaint which confined him to his room for many weeks ; and Barney felt that while such an opportunity might never occur to him again, Luke was likely to render it almost altogether unprofitable to him.

And yet he was cheating all the time, and he had even succeeded in persuading Luke he was not cheating.

It happened one afternoon that a usual customer had called at the shop, and, among other things, had bought a pound of five-shilling tea. Before the canister had been moved off the counter, another person entered, and made some inquiries as to the price of Mr. Atkins' teas. It was evident even to Luke that, from the manner she looked about the shop, and hesitated before she spoke, that the lady was a stranger. Barney's quick eye told him something more, namely, that she was not only a stranger to the shop but to the town, and judging from her use of spectacles that



her sight was not very good, he succeeded in making her pay seven shillings for the very same article for which the last customer had paid five ; and as soon as her back was turned, Barney winked his eye at Luke, and made such a comical face at him, and imitated the poor lady's peculiar walk so successfully, that it was impossible to help laughing. But let us do Luke the justice to say, that his smile, passed away immediately, and he felt quite horror-struck at the act of dishonesty.

The whole affair had taken place so rapidly, that he at first thought he must have made some mistake about it; but then why had Barney winked at him? It was evident that the transaction was a deliberate one, and that the shopman had knowingly cheated the customer out of two shillings.

Luke felt his cheeks glowing with shame, and he was greatly vexed with himself that he had allowed the lady to go out of the shop without coming to an explanation. Then he thought he would go up-stairs at once and tell his uncle what had happened. Then he thought what an enemy he should have in

Barney if he did. Then he hesitated what he should do, and whether it would not be best to pretend not to see what had happened, and wait for a second occasion (should such arise) before he spoke to Barney.

And this latter plan he would have adopted, but Barney did not choose that the affair should so end. All he had done, he had done upon calculation, and with the full knowledge that Luke's eye was upon him. He thought the time was come when it was fit that they should understand each other, or at least appear to do so, for he had no intention of opening himself wholly to Luke.

Accordingly, having made his grimace, Barney replaced the canister on its shelf, and then slowly counted out the money which lay upon the counter.

"One pound of Souchong at five shillings," said he, making an entry in the till-book. "One, two, three, four, five : that, Peter Atkins, is for you," and he slipped the shillings through the hole that conveyed them to the till. "Six, seven," he continued, "that is the old lady's generosity to you, Barney

Ford. Much obliged to you ma'am, and may you, and all who are like you, pay many visits to our shop." And first Barney took up one shilling, and next the other very carefully, and deposited them in his waistcoat pocket.

Up to this time Luke had been under the impression that, although an act of dishonesty had been committed, it had been done for the advantage of his absent uncle, but when he saw Ford coolly pocket the difference, he was so ashamed and so indignant, that he kept silence no longer.

"Why, Barney!" he exclaimed, "what have you been doing?"

"*Whom* have I been doing? I suppose you mean," replied the shopman. "I'm sure I don't know, for I never saw her before. But I have done her properly, haven't I?"

Luke was so taken aback with Ford's effrontery, that he knew not what to say, and only repeated his former question, "What have you been doing?"

"Shaving the lady," replied Barney, with the same coolness as before. "Where's the harm?"

"Why it's cheating!" said Luke in a tone of great disgust.

"Whew?" whistled Barney Ford, with a prolonged whistle of amazement. "Why, Luke, you don't know what you're talking about. Such words never pass between gentlemen. 'Cheating' is a word with an ugly sound about it. So I must have a little explanation if you please. Whom have I cheated?"

"The old lady in the yellow shawl."

"How?"

"By making her pay two shillings more than Mrs. Dickson did."

"Make her pay! I never made her pay. She asked to see some teas, and I told her I could *recommend* her some at seven shillings, but I was ready to have sold it her at five. If she gave the money readily, where's the cheating? Every tradesman has a right to all the profit he can get."

If Luke had been brought up like a Christian he would have had a ready answer for this last remark: but his ideas on such subjects had been taken from his unhappy father.

However, he did see one part of the fallacy of the argument, and observed that if two shillings additional had been made on the tea, that sum ought to have gone into the till, not into Barney's pocket.

"By no means," said Ford, "I sold your uncle's tea at his own price; what more is made by it is made by my own sharpness, and, therefore, I have the best right to it; besides all the world knows and allows these little profits to be fair perquisites. All masters that ever I heard of allow their men to have perquisites. There is no more cheating in taking one's fair perquisite than in asking for one's fair wages. And the more wages and the more perquisites that a poor fellow like me can get the better, for I am sure they are hardly enough earned. And indeed, if it were not for the perquisites few of us could live at all, for our wages are not enough to find us decent clothes, as I am afraid you must have found already."

This last remark was accompanied by a glance at Luke's coat, which was certainly growing very shabby. The boy looked at the

stain on his cuff, at the burst button-holes, at the places where buttons should have been, but were not, remembered the jeering remark of a smart acquaintance on a preceding Sunday, and in that sight and thought grew so confused, that he was unable to detect the false and deceitful reasonings of Barney Ford, and found himself beginning to think that he had been over hasty in his judgment, that there was nothing dishonest in doing what all the rest of the world did, and that, in point of fact, when viewed in its proper light, the system of perquisites was not at all objectionable.

Such was the conclusion at which Luke arrived; and hundreds allow themselves in the same opinion, each one of whom has some favourite argument of his own to allege in favour of what he does. The objection to the system, however, is to be found in four words, THOU SHALT NOT STEAL; and till God has revoked His law against theft, it is not in the power of man to prove that perquisites are not sinful. It never can be otherwise than wrong to take and appropriate to one's-

self that which belongs to another person, without that person's direct knowledge and consent. The world may have a hundred names wherewith to disguise the true character of the act,—a hundred excuses wherewith to palliate it, and universal custom to quote in favour of it. But it is *robbery* notwithstanding, and as such must be accounted for in the day of final retribution.

It is commonly said that such things only become "perquisites" as have either no value in the owner's eyes, or have ceased to be of value. It is difficult to see how this affects the argument, or how the mere fact of a thing ceasing to be of value should give any but its original owner a title to it; but we may be very sure of this, that unless perquisites were things which had a money-value, we should hear very little about them. And further, we may be sure that the cases are few indeed wherein those who allow themselves in perquisites content themselves with what they were satisfied with at first. The whole system is so undefined, it is often so hard (even upon these persons' own principles) to say

where perquisites end, and pilfering begins, that no really well-disposed person will ever take a perquisite.

All habits must be dangerous which tend even remotely to set the conscience asleep, and to break down the barriers of right and wrong; and this is the direct tendency of perquisites. To the honest they are snares, to the dishonest they are encouragements. Viewed as the world views them, they seem to have a plausible excuse. But this plausibility is their mischief. It tends to make the first descent into sin easy. And all steps downward, *after the first is once taken*, are without difficulty. There are no more obstacles, no more opportunities for hesitation. Use and habit are every thing.

Once more Luke came into the way of temptation, and once more, of course, he fell. *Of course*: because he was wanting in that which can alone enable a man to resist temptation; first, sound principles, which would have enabled him to discern between right and wrong, when brought before him; and, secondly, grace and help from on high, which



would have given him strength and power to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

It was said by one who well knew the workings of the human heart, that a person does not *begin* to fall when the fall is perceptible. The hand only obeys the suggestions of a heart which is already corrupted. In the case of the unhappy lad whose history we are telling, his whole career had been a progress from bad to worse, because having never realized to himself the awfulness of those vows to which in his Baptism he was pledged; having never been accustomed to consider God's commandments the rule of his life, there was nothing within him to oppose itself to temptation from without. If he struggled at all, it was only faintly and irresolutely, and so he was sure to be worsted in the contest.

Hitherto he had not been dishonest, because he had not been in a position in which dishonesty offered him advantages. He had now been thrown into circumstances in which the temptation would have power, and accordingly the enemy of souls presented it to him. At first, as we have seen, he was shocked at

the suggestion, but in a while he ceased to feel his first aversion to it; he became less sensible of its hideousness, admitted the convenience of the world's extenuating language with respect to it; in fine, was reconciled to it in another, and so came to practise it himself.

And did he stop, good reader, think you, where he was? Was he contented with his share of "perquisites," so called? No; he had begun by listening to those who called evil good, and so he soon learned to do evil without thinking it necessary to find any excuse wherewith to lull his conscience. His mind became familiarized with sin, till he no longer felt repugnance to it. He put away from him the thought that God's Eye was always upon him; the only fear that agitated him was that arising from the apprehension that he might be detected by man. Under such circumstances, it will be readily conceived that in no long time he became an apt scholar of Barney Ford, and that the same cleverness which, under the influence of good principles, might have tended to the advan-

tage of his worldly prospects, now only served to render him a quicker and more successful adept in evil.

He soon learned what Ford represented (we hope and believe falsely) "to be the common tricks of the trade ;" he learned the arts of adulteration and deception, the juggling artifices of false measures, and an unjust balance: the safest and most skilful methods of "taking in" unwary purchasers, and of cheating at one and the same time his own employer and the public.

Of course we shall not enter into the detail of these unchristian acts, nor do our readers so questionable a service as instruct them in modes of dishonesty, of which they are happily ignorant. The good would only peruse such things with pain, and for the evil-disposed we do not write. It is sufficient to say that Luke Sharp ceased to be honest. It is true that the amount of his unlawful gains was small. His frauds and peculations were not likely to do his master any serious injury either in pocket or good name. But he who will steal a pin will steal a purse. The bar-

rier between honesty and dishonesty was broken down in Luke's mind, and all that now was wanting to make him a bolder or more notorious criminal were the temptation and the opportunity.

So far, then, Barney Ford had been successful. He had so far seduced Luke into his own evil courses, that he had no longer any fear that the latter would betray him. For his own sake he must be silent. Nevertheless Barney still longed after his former liberty. While any eye was upon him, he knew that he was not safe, and his covetousness was continually suggesting the thought that he was now only making half the profits which formerly came to him entire.

The companionship of the wicked is never lasting; their friendship is hollow. Self-interest may unite them for a time, but when that tie is broken, there is nothing else to hold them together; and they are soon ready for treachery, or for any yet more hostile act against each other.

Thus Luke and Barney went on together for two years, on good terms outwardly, for

it was to their advantage not to quarrel with one another, but without any mutual regard, esteem, or respect. Luke, indeed, had no secret feelings against his companion, and rather liked his society than disliked it; for Ford still flattered his weak points, and affected to admire greatly his scholarship and cleverness.

The wily shopman, on the other hand, never for a moment lost sight of his real objects. He disliked Luke far more at the end of three years than he had done at the beginning of that period, for every day he felt him more and more in the way; but he concealed his aversion more carefully than ever, lest any exposure of his real feelings should mar his schemes. He had succeeded in securing Luke's silence; but, as the reader knows, there was another point at which he was aiming,—Luke's removal from his uncle's establishment. And Barney was resolved never to rest till he had effected this object. For a while he endeavoured, whenever he had the opportunity, to induce Mr. Atkins to look out for a clerk's place for his nephew, for

which he represented Luke to be much better fitted than for any other situation. But Mr. Atkins was in declining health, and indisposed to take trouble about anything. Barney, therefore, resolved to change his plan, and to effect Luke's removal with as little delay as possible.

"And so, Barney," said Luke to his companion one evening, as they were finishing the business which remained to be done after the shop was closed. "And so you're going over to Hob's Hole, on Sunday, to spend the day with Joe Swindell."

"Yes, you know I've backed his dog Billy to kill twenty rats in fifteen minutes."

"John Haggerty says his dog Jimbo would kill thirty in the same time."

"I dare say he does. Jack Haggerty would say anything. He's the most boasting coxcomb I ever met with in all my days," observed Mr. Ford. "Did you ever see Jimbo at work?"

"No," answered Luke, with a sigh, "I never saw a real, regular rat-hunt with good dogs."

"You don't mean it?" exclaimed Barney,

with a look of pity and contempt. "Well, there's no harm in confessing it to *me*, because you're always safe with me, and it won't go further ; but if I were you, I would not, on any account, let such a thing out before others. Dear, dear ! if any of our 'fancy' men were to hear you say this,—Spragge, for instance, or Horrocks, how they would laugh !"

Luke shrunk from the thought of being laughed at by Spragge or Horrocks, and steadfastly resolved to follow Barney's advice, though he could not help adding, "I don't know why you should be surprised. I'm sure I've told you twenty times that I never did see a rat-hunt, and that I very much wished to see one."

"So you have," replied Barney, "but I thought you were joking. I thought you were trying to see how much I could swallow."

Barney thought no such thing ; but it had not suited his purpose hitherto to appear to understand Luke's hints on the subject. After a pause, in which he pretended to be lost in wonder, he continued. "And so you never *saw* a regular good rat-hunt? Dear, dear !

the scores and scores I've witnessed in Larry Bucks' barn, at Hob's Hole. Why, I was there when Spragge's Pincher fought Bob Sullivan's Dusty!"

"So I've heard you say," observed Luke, and then added in a discontented tone, "Well, I must say I think that Joe Swindell might sometimes ask *me* to go with him as well as you."

"Perhaps he doesn't know that you care for such things."

"Oh yes, he does."

"Perhaps he doesn't think you care to bet."

"I don't suppose that's his reason," said Luke doubtfully.

"Perhaps not," replied Barney. "I've often wondered myself that he hasn't asked you to join us, and I suspect I've found out the reason; but you wouldn't like to hear it."

"Oh yes, I should," answered Luke, though with some hesitation. "What is it?"

"I would really rather not tell you."

"Oh, stuff and nonsense, out with it."

"It would do you no good if I did tell you, and you couldn't make things different."



"Well but, at any rate, telling me could do no harm. Do tell me, Barney."

"If you insist upon it, I suppose I must, but I had rather not. I think the reason is that you don't dress like one of us. Your clothes are so very shabby."

"Ah," said Luke, colouring deeply, "I was afraid it was that."

"Why you might be sure it could be nothing else," answered Ford; "and I hope you won't be offended at my telling you the truth. It's best to tell the truth."

Distressed and humiliated as he felt, Luke could hardly help smiling as he thought of the difference between Ford's professions and practice on the subject of truth-telling; but he let it pass, and only observed that he was not offended, adding that he thought his a very hard case.

"To be sure it is," answered his companion. "A likely young fellow such as you are, so good-looking, and so clever, and all that,—it *is* very hard that you shouldn't be one of *us*, only because you don't make your money *so fast*. But this is the way of the world, *every one* is looked down upon that has not

cash in their pockets. Well, never mind; your turn will come by-and-by, and when you are figged out as you ought to be, I'll engage you'll be more looked at as you walk along the High Street than any of us are now."

In saying this, Barney said no more than was true, for Luke was growing up into a handsome young man. The misfortune, however, was not that Luke knew himself to be good-looking, but that he was vain of his looks. Ford was well aware of this, and had resolved to take advantage of the weak point. He had observed Luke's love of dress, and he considered that if he could make him feel that his inability to purchase smart clothes was an actual disadvantage to him, (as it had for long been an humiliation) Luke would soon be led to effect this object by any means which might be suggested to him, and which did not to any great extent shock his no longer scrupulous mind. And, as Ford had anticipated, Luke once more fell into the snare which had been spread for him.

"Ah, it is all very well to tell one that my time will come by-and-by," replied Luke, in

whose mind the vision of a swaggering walk down the High Street, and the admiration of the beholders, had stirred up a spirit of impatience. "But to-morrow never comes. It may be years and years before I can get a salary that will enable me to turn out as I should like. Oh, what an unlucky dog I am!"

"Your uncle does keep you very close," observed Barney in a tone of sympathy.

"Five pounds five, for clothes, and shoes, and washing, and pocket money," murmured Luke, with a groan. "That is all he gives yearly."

"You don't mean it;" exclaimed Ford indignantly, and as if this was the first time he ever heard the complaint. "Five pound five! What an old miserly hunks! I beg your pardon, Luke, for so speaking of him, but I'm quite angry that you should be so underpaid; you that are worth four times as much to him any day."

"I don't know *that*," said Luke rather more modestly than usual, for the flattery was too gross even for *him* to swallow; "but"—

"Five pound five," repeated Barney, affect-

ing not to hear him. "Why, that's but one, six, three, the quarter. You must manage well not to go barefoot. And yet," added Ford slowly, "I've heard that old Turnpenny used not to give Frank Loose any more, and he cut as great a dash as any body till he was imprudent."

"Imprudent! I thought he was transported."

"So he was; which shews that he must have been *very* imprudent, and rash too. The fact is, Frank was a clever chap, but he had no judgment; now *you* have judgment."

"My uncle says he shall raise my wages at Christmas," observed Luke.

"Indeed? I'm glad to hear it. If he gives you ten, instead of five, you may do better."

"Ten!" exclaimed Luke sadly, and shaking his head. "No, no, he will only give me seven."

"Perhaps he will increase your wages in a couple of years' time," rejoined Barney.

"A couple of years! I'm sure I can't wait a couple of years. Oh, Barney, you only say that to tease me. I know you could suggest

something to me if you would. If you were in my place you would never rest satisfied to be as I am."

"No, indeed, I wouldn't think of such a thing."

"Then what would you do?"

"I should go and order a suit of clothes of Levi Abrahams, and take my chance of paying for them, or making it up to him somehow."

"But would Abrahams trust me?"

"I suppose not, unless you left an equivalent of some kind in his hands. But then Levi never asks questions. He would not object to your borrowing something of your uncle, so as you replaced it when convenient."

"Well, I think I'll go to my uncle and ask him," said Sharp.

Barney looked at him for a moment, to see if his companion were in earnest, and then burst out laughing in his face. "Well done, Johnny Raw," exclaimed Ford, as soon as he had somewhat controlled his laughter, "That *would* be a good scheme! Go and tell him that Barney Ford recommended you to ask him to lend you his gold watch, to pledge with

the old Jew thief, in Rogue's Alley, till you could afford to pay for a suit of clothes fit for a Sunday buck! Ha! ha! ha! well that is a good one!"

Luke bit his lips, and felt very angry: but, alas! his anger arose, not from shame and disgust at such a wicked suggestion, but simply from the mortification of being laughed at for ignorance of evil.

Barney saw he had carried his ridicule too far, and that there was a risk of failure in his object, so he immediately apologized.

"I beg your pardon, Luke, I did not mean to offend. You have misunderstood me. For my part, I can't see any possible objection to your borrowing a few things, that are not wanted, out of the warehouse, without mentioning it to your uncle. Old folks have such straight-laced notions, that there is no good consulting them about every trifle. They can't keep pace with the way of the world. You won't do your uncle an injury, because you will replace the goods as soon as convenient; and as a matter of prudence you would not take anything that is likely to be wanted immediately. That being the case, I

don't see that it makes any difference whether the things lie a few months in Levi's warehouse, or in your uncle's.' But, remember, I don't advise you one way or the other. I only throw out a suggestion. The thing is commonly done, as Levi will tell you."

"Is there no other way?" asked Luke, for conscience, blunted as it was, had not entirely ceased to goad him, and he felt that there would at least be something very *awkward* in being detected in such a course.

"Oh yes," replied Barney, "you can go on in your old clothes."

"But can you recommend me no other way of raising money? Could not I borrow it?"

"Why, to say truth, there's always some difficulty in borrowing where there's no security for repayment. Can you get any one to stand surety for you?"

Luke shook his head, and admitted he could not.

"Then there's another thing. If you do borrow money you must pay interest."

"I think I could manage to pay interest," *said Luke*, catching at the idea.

“Suppose I lend you two pounds for two months, could you pay me a pound for the loan?”

Luke knew enough of money matters to be aware that such a rate of interest was in the highest degree unjust and exorbitant, and he told Barney that he thought he was asking too much.

Barney replied that the last thing in the world he wished was to lend money; it was the most hazardous, and unprofitable, and thankless thing, he said, that could be done; nothing but the anxious desire to accommodate a friend in difficulties would have induced him to make the proposal. It was but justice to himself, where no security could be given, to ask a higher rate of interest. But he had no wish to lend money,—not he. Luke might go and try somebody else. And then Barney began to talk about his hunger, and to wonder what there would be for supper. He felt secure of his prey.

And he did not err in judgment. Before five minutes were over Luke had made an humble petition that Barney would not take amiss what had been said, and expressed an



earnest hope that he would advance the two pounds.

Luke had at this time five-and-twenty shillings in his purse, a portion of which sum remained out of his last wages, and a portion was the produce of that system of speculation into which, as we have seen, he had been introduced by Ford.

He now made sure that for three pounds he would be dressed in the height of the Birdsley fashion, and he calculated that, with a half-year's wages which would be due in six weeks time, and with the help of a few more perquisites, he should have no difficulty in repaying his creditor at the appointed time. Barney thought very differently, but covetous as he was, he would have risked four times as much money in the hope of getting Luke away from the shop.

The next evening after shop-hours, Ford accompanied Luke to Levi Abrahams', that being the establishment whence Ford himself, and most of his gay friends, procured those articles of dress which produced so much sensation in the High Street on Sundays. *The Jew's* house was a shabby, dilapidated

tenement, at the bottom of a narrow alley or passage, in one of the lowest and most disreputable parts of the town. The Jew himself was a receiver of stolen goods, a pawnbroker, a money-lender, a dealer in old iron and second-hand clothes, and had the credit of being ready to buy anything of anybody without asking questions, and yet of being able to baffle the police on all occasions.

To this person, who seemed a very intimate friend of Barney, Luke was now introduced; and upon Barney's assurance that he was likely to become a good customer, Luke was allowed to select articles of clothing which Abrahams assured him were worth more than double the three pounds which were now transferred to the Jew's cash box. There was a frock-coat, "as good as new," a waistcoat "of the same pattern as Sir Gregory Tandem wore at the last races," a pair of plaid trowsers, and out of pure generosity and goodwill the munificent Levi threw in a blue satin stock, with a running pattern of orange lilies, which Ford declared to be the most elegant thing on which his eyes had ever rested.

Luke returned home overjoyed at his pur-

chases, not a little elated with the parting request of the Jew, who "respectfully solicited further favours," and expressed great readiness to purchase any little articles of which at any time he might find it convenient to dispose. Coat, waistcoat, stock, and trowsers were fitted and refitted, and held up to the light,—now near, and now at arm's length, and the tardy hours were counted which intervened between Thursday and Sunday.

And Sunday came at last; to many a day of calm and holy rest, of devotion and thankfulness, but to Luke a day of vanity and disobedience. First, he must find an excuse for not going to church, which his sick uncle always wished him to do; so he made as many delays as possible over his house-work, and took care not to return from an errand on which he was sent till the church-bells had done ringing. Then he went up-stairs, as he said, "to clean himself," and nobody saw anything more of him till he turned into the High Street in the full splendour of his new accoutrements.

At first he felt rather shy, and as he heard

some little boys exclaim to one another, "Look, Tom, what a swell!" and "See, Harry, there *is* a Sunday buck!" he could not help blushing with satisfaction and gratified vanity, though in the midst of his glee he was vexed to find that something had put into his head the recollection of the magpie in peacock's feathers, and that the more he thought about himself the less he was pleased. He tried to shake off the uncomfortable feeling, but he could not, so he endeavoured to find some of his acquaintances, and smother remorse amid laughter and folly.

While in the act of hastening forward to join some of his (so called) friends whom he spied in advance of him, his attention was attracted by the rattle of a vehicle behind him. He turned round. It was Joe Swindell in his father's gig, driving Barney Ford to Hob's Hole.

Oh how Luke envied the one-eyed bulldog Billy that sat between them! and how insignificant did he feel in his own eyes, though the sun was shining on his waistcoat and resplendent stock. He was not perfectly

happy yet. He felt he could not be so until he had been one of a party to Hob's Hole, till he should be acknowledged by the world in general as "one of Joe Swindell's set."

However, he had the satisfaction (such as it was) of feeling that he was now at least in the way to attain the object of his wishes. Joe no longer looked askance at him, no longer bowed to him when nobody was by, and turned away as if he had not observed him, whenever there was any risk of such an act of condescension being seen. Joe not only gave him a friendly nod, but cried out in an audible voice, "Well, Sharp, how are you?" while Barney Ford gave a grin, and waved his hand in the most familiar manner.

"There's a couple of precious scamps," said a voice behind him. "A pretty pass things are come to among us! Some of our shopmen drive about as if they were lords!"

"Well, it's the masters' own fault," replied another voice, "but they'll find out their mistake by and by."

Luke felt sure he knew the voices, but was afraid to turn round and look at the

speakers : he had a foreboding of something unpleasant, and quickened his pace. There were four persons walking arm-in-arm just in front of him, so he could not advance as rapidly as he wished, and he was constrained to hear a few words more, though they were spoken in an under tone.

"Look at that ape before us ! Did you ever see such a figure ? He must have had the choice pickings out of some old Jew clothesman's bag."

"Hush. I dare say it all came from old Abrahams'. That fellow is the ruin of all our apprentices : sells them stolen goods cheap. Inspector Irons must watch him more closely. Let us pass the boy and see who he is."

This was too much for Luke. If his vanity had been wounded by the first part of what he had heard, his fears had been no less aroused by the last observations. So without taking time to consider, he darted forward for the purpose of passing the persons who were in immediate advance of him. To effect this it was necessary that he should step off the causeway into the road. Unluckily for him, in the act

of doing so, his heel rested on a treacherous piece of orange-peel. He slipped, staggered, reeled, and fell flat on his back, in the muddy gutter, with his head at the feet of his old acquaintances Messrs. Grinderstone and Slag!

There are, perhaps, few persons who have not, at some time of their lives, experienced the discomfort of being brought into close and sudden contact with *the* individual in the world whom they would most wish to avoid. My readers, therefore, will understand something of Luke's sensation when his eyes met those of the partners in the Phoenix Foundry: but I heartily trust they may never have such cause to blush and hide their faces as Luke had. He struggled up instantly, for he felt that in the rapidity of his movements consisted his only chance of not being recognized. But his was a case of "most haste, worst speed," for the orange-peel still stuck to his heel, and in his effort to right himself, he gave his ankle such a twist that he was very near falling a second time.

"Take your time, man, take your time," cried Mr. Slag laughing, "or you'll be in the gutter again."

"Are you hurt?" asked Mr. Grinderstone, as Luke began to limp away as fast as the strain would allow him.

"No, sir," replied Luke, hurrying on, and keeping his face away from the person who who addressed him.

"Then why do you limp so? Stop a moment," said the fat partner, who had no idea of being in a hurry under any circumstances.

Luke would not have stopped if he could have helped it, but every moment he felt greater difficulty in moving, and he was forced to support himself by the wall.

"I think I should know your face," observed Mr. Slag, looking hard at him, "but you lads make such figures of yourselves on Sundays, there is no recognizing you."

"Aye, aye," interposed Grinderstone, "'fine feathers make fine birds;' but you've dragged your tail-feathers properly, I can tell you."

Luke turned round to inspect his muddy coat, and in so doing was recognized.

"Hey! what! why you're the runaway that we met upon the moor are you not? the, the...."



"The promising boy that you gave the book to, Grinderstone," added Slag, helping his partner's imperfect recollections. "Times have mended with you," he continued, addressing Luke, "what are you doing now?"

"I'm still living with my uncle, sir."

"And is that waistcoat your own taste or your uncle's?" asked Mr. Slag.

"My own, sir," replied Luke, not a little confused.

"And the stock? that of course is your own?"

"Yes, sir."

"And when you've chosen your wardrobe, your uncle pays for it?"

"Yes, sir, . . . . No sir," answered Luke, growing more and more confused at this kind of cross-examination.

"Yes, sir, no, sir! what kind of an answer is that? Do you know who it is that rides upon debt's back?" asked Mr. Grinderstone sternly.

"No, sir."

"*Lying* does. Lying rides upon debt's back."

Luke's face grew scarlet to the very roots of his hair. He did not know what to answer. At last he began in a saucy tone, "I suppose, sir, you insinuate . . ."

"I insinuate nothing," said Mr. Grinderstone quietly.

"You said something about debt, sir, and lying, sir, and if you mean to apply that to me. . ."

"My friend, if you find the cap fits, you had better wear it, without making more ado."

"I don't know what right you have to take away my character," said Luke in an angry tone.


"Dear me, young man," observed Mr. Slag, who had been quietly watching the changes in Luke's unhappy face. "You quite mistake matters; it is you, not we, who are taking away your character; nobody can lose their character but by some act or indiscretion of their own. If a grocer's apprentice is seen strutting about like a strolling player, dressed beyond his means, and above his rank, and if his master is known to be too ill to look after him, and if he grows

confused and saucy when he is spoken to by those whose years and situation give them a right to speak and expostulate, sober-minded folks can come but to one conclusion, that such a person is at least on the road to ruin, though they may not know how far he has gone along it."

And putting his arm into his companion's, Mr. Slag only added, "I believe, Grinderstone, we should have done better by him, if we had left him that night to learn a trade among the nailers, as Run-away Jem did."

And then the two partners turned down the next street, and left Luke to his own reflections.

Meanwhile, with a sprained ankle, with his smart coat dripping with the mud of the gutter, and with a mind ill at ease, Luke found himself exposed to the laughter of the ragged children that had gathered round him, and worse than all, to the grinning salutations of his smart friends, who passed and repassed him as he hobbled along, and continually added to his discomfiture by taking no pains to conceal from his wounded vanity that they



took his misfortune in the light of a capital joke.

“How are you off for mud?” asked one.

“Why Luke, you’re quite a nosegay!” said another. “What strong perfumes you use.”

“I say,” enquired a third, “which do you like best, Grinderstone or Slag? Are they going to take you into partnership with them?”

How thankful was Luke when he reached his uncle’s house,—how thankful to get upstairs, and tear off all his smart habiliments, and to slip on the shabby but more respectable dress, which he had hitherto been accustomed to wear on Sundays!

With what changed feelings he looked on his recent purchases! How he wished the whole suit was back again on Levi Abrahams’ shelves! and that he was out of debt to Barney!

“Certainly,” thought he to himself, “if I had known how little enjoyment I should have had this day, I would not have been in such a hurry!” And then he fell into a reverie, and

reflection followed reflection, each one more painful than another, about the bad kind of life he was leading. And, angry as he was at them, he could not get Mr. Slag's words out of his head, especially what he had said about *the road to ruin*.

Thus Luke had once more an opportunity afforded him of breaking off in his career of sin and folly. He learned, by bitter experience, that even the attainment of his wishes could bring no satisfaction to him, unless the things on which the heart is set are right. He had been startled by finding how differently from what he thought of himself others thought of him. He had had a taste of the hollowness of worldly friendship. All these were things calculated to induce him to pause. It was not too late to retrace his steps.

Thus mercifully are we dealt with; thus kindly does Providence beset the paths of sin with thorns and briers, in order that, by the misery we find in yielding to temptations, by personal experience, that even in this world transgression and punishment invariably follow each other, we may be induced to resist the

tempter, and to keep close to the observance of our Baptismal promises.

Luke was miserable, dissatisfied with himself, and every thing else, and when he went to bed he was wishing and half resolving to become different from what he had been of late. And had he but betaken himself to earnest prayer, and unsparing self-examination, he might and would have had Grace given him, which would have enabled him to confirm and strengthen those resolutions.

But, instead of doing this, he allowed his mind to dwell on the difficulties of retracing his steps,—on the humiliation to which he would be exposed; how he would be laughed at; how painful it would be to break through his present habits. And as he lay tossing about uneasily in bed, the difficulties seemed to increase more and more, and he became more and more irresolute, and so fell asleep.

And with his dreams his good intentions passed away: and the morrow found him as before, with Barney Ford for his adviser, with ears ready to drink in with satisfaction an account of the doings at Hob's Hole, and proud

to listen to a message from Joe Swindell, inviting him to be present at "the sports" which were to take place there on a Sunday which he named.

From this time Luke Sharp thought no more of his resolutions of amendment. On the contrary, he was becoming daily more and more indisposed to good; and when he found that among the bad companions with whom he was associating, little was thought of his cleverness and scholarship, in his ambition to hold a foremost place at all hazards, he soon grew desirous to surpass them in vice, and to become a leader in profligacy. He grew careless, and reckless, and joined, without any of his previous misgivings and hesitation, in all their evil doings.

We shall not weary and disgust our readers with any details of the low company and degrading scenes with which the unhappy youth now connected himself, nor shall we think it necessary to point out the methods through which, by little and little, Barney Ford contrived to corrupt his mind, and to lead him on *to ruin.*

When a fly has entangled itself in a spider's web, the spider allows it to struggle for a while in order that its wings and feet may get more and more hampered and entangled: then it issues from its hiding-place, runs down the guiding line till it reaches its prey, wraps it round and round with fresh-spun threads, till the victim is so involved in them as to be able to make no resistance, and then it feeds on it leisurely. The instinctive habits of the spider are an exact illustration of the proceedings of Barney Ford.

It must be left to the reader's sagacity to determine whether it was not in consequence of some previous arrangement with this wily scoundrel and Joe Swindell, that Luke was invited to Hob's Hole on the Sunday after he had received his half-year's wages, and a few days before his debt to Ford, together with its heavy interest, was to be paid. Suffice it to say, that on that occasion Luke was received by Joe and his set with much apparent kindness, that there was a good deal of additional drinking, apparently in honour of the new guest; that Luke was gradually led to bet on the



event of the "sports;" that he was at first uniformly successful, and hailed by his companions as an extremely judicious better; that his vanity was flattered, and he was plied with more drink, till he grew confident; that he then betted all he was worth on a single issue, and *lost*.

How he got home he knew not: but he woke on the Monday morning with a racking headache, without a shilling in the world, a heavy debt to pay, and an eager creditor.

"Oh, Barney, Barney! how could you let me get into such trouble," he exclaimed in the bitterness of his heart, as the shopman came into his room to see if he were dressed.

"Nay, I couldn't help it," replied the other. "You would not be guided by anybody. It was the drink that did it; you were like a madman."

"I was indeed mad," said Luke with a deep sigh.

"If I were you, I would make it a rule never to bet when you drink. Do one or the other, which you please, but don't do both at the same time. I never do. A man who

wants to win should have his head clear, and his pulse quiet."

Luke could only answer with a groan.

"Oh, don't take matters to heart so ; you'll be better by-and-by, and you'll have better luck next time. Gentlemen who play must expect ups and downs. Many a one that has got up a beggar, has gone to bed rich. You must bet again."

"Bet again !" exclaimed Luke. "Why, you know as well as I do that I have lost *all*, and shall not have a shilling of my own for six months to come."

"Why, Luke," cried the other, with well-feigned astonishment, "you have not betted away my money, I hope. You have never done such a thing as that."

"I have, though," replied Luke, in a tone of dismay.

"*You have !* !" thundered out Ford, with a shocking oath. "You have, and you stand there cool and comfortable, and as bold as brass, to confess that you can't and won't pay a debt of honour !"

"That I *can't*, not that I *won't*."

Barney gave an incredulous shrug. "It's all the same," said he.

"No, it isn't," replied Luke. "I *will* pay, indeed I will, as soon as I can."

"As soon as you can," cried the other with a sneer, "I wonder when that will be. At 'to morrow come never,' I suppose. Why you're nothing better than a poor, pitiful, sneaking, lying cheat. A fine account I shall give of you to Swindell, and Haggerty, and Spragge, and Horrocks, and the rest of them ! There isn't one of them that will ever speak to you again. They are not folks to shirk their debts of honour, I can tell you."

"Nor am I one to shirk my debts. I'm ready to take back to old Abrahams' all the things I bought of him. I haven't worn them half-a-dozen times. I'll do anything you wish ; but don't expose me to Swindell. I had rather anything happened than that."

Barney seemed rather softened. "Well, you can take your things," he said, "to Abrahams' this evening."

And Luke did so ; and, as the reader will have anticipated, Mr. Levi Abrahams was by *no means* willing to receive them back. His

shop was over-stocked already, he said; the fashion was altered; articles of that particular description were not worn so much as formerly; then, there was a stain on the back of the coat, and the satin stock was 'frayed'; no, he must beg to decline the purchase.

Luke was about to leave the shop.

"That is to say, Mr. Sharp," continued the Jew, "I *should* decline it in the case of any other customer, but I shall be glad to oblige *you*. Let me see, it will be a dead loss, but I think I must not consider that for once. I will give you ten shillings for the lot."

Ten shillings for what three weeks before had cost three pounds, and had been declared to be worth six! It was now Luke's turn to hesitate; and he told the Jew, after a moment's reflection, that as he was in difficulties he must try and find a better market.

"In difficulties are you, sir?" said Levi in a sympathising tone (for he had already had his lesson from Barney Ford), "I am very sorry to hear it. The times are bad for us all. But dear, dear, why should you sell your own clothes because you are in difficulties? Couldn't you borrow a few goods? I

should be happy to advance you cash on that kind of security, and the goods could be replaced at your convenience, you know. I assure you, sir, it is a thing which is done every day. In fact, half our customers do it."

"Really?" said Luke with some degree of eagerness, yet feeling all the while that he was utterly disgracing himself by listening to such a proposal.

"Oh, nothing so common," replied the crafty Jew, leading the way into a back parlour, and seating Luke beside him. "If you will take the trouble to ask any of your acquaintance, or any of the other gentlemen who are in my line of business, you will find that it is as I say."

And then Abrahams went on to shew how easily it might be done, and to remove Luke's scruples: winding up the argument by the remark, that it would be a thousand pities if such a handsome, well-educated young man were to be compelled to go about in shabby clothes, after having been so decently dressed, and to make himself a butt and a laughing-stock to all his friends in the town.

And this paltry temptation, and gross flattery, working on the vanity and fears of Luke, at length prevailed. And, reader, if you wonder that such should have been the case, you must remember that his mind had long been losing its sense of the difference between right and wrong through his habits of petty pilfering and daily falsehood. It is only the first step, as we have already taken occasion to mention, in the downward path of guilt that is difficult: that once taken, all the rest is easy. And downward will ever be the course of those who have knowledge without religion, and cleverness without principle.

“But how am I to get at the goods in the warehouse?” asked Luke, after a pause. “My uncle always keeps the key himself.”

“Oh, you must borrow one, I suppose, unless you know where he keeps it. What sort of a key is it?”

Luke described it.

“Do you think any of these would fit the lock?” asked the Jew, carelessly throwing down a bunch, in which he very well knew there was one which would give admittance

into Mr. Atkins' warehouse, seeing that Barney Ford had already tried it.

Luke said he did not see any that looked just the same, and the respectable Mr. Abrahams did not at present think it desirable to enlighten his mind on the history and mystery of skeleton keys. He only slipped one off the bunch, and as he put it into Luke's hand observed, "I think, from your description, that this one may do. You had better try it sometime when the house is quiet. And if it fits, you can put the cinnamon and nutmegs in a bag, and bring them down here the first time you go out on an errand. You had better come about mid-day, and then nobody will suspect anything. And you must not come into the shop, but go to our side door, and ring twice."

That same evening, with a beating heart, Luke proceeded to the warehouse, inserted the key into the lock, found that it fitted it, opened the door, entered, filled his bag, and returned—a FELON.

But no eye, save One, which never sleeps, had seen him; he was safe, so far as the person

whom he had injured was concerned, and not the slightest accident occurred to excite his fears. Yet his guilty conscience made him feel that every one whom he met was suspecting him or watching him, and more than once in the course of the ensuing night he left his sleepless bed, and groped his way down stairs for the purpose of ascertaining that the bag was still in the corner in which he had placed it.

The first time he went down in the dark, and so returned. The second time, through some vague, nervous apprehension which had taken possession of him, that he had been deceived, and had felt something which was not his bag, he took a lucifer-match with him.

"Oh, what a thing is science," he thought within himself. "What a convenience to be able to get a light without noise or trouble!" And he rubbed the match against the stone floor, and it burst into a flame. What was his horror, when he looked up, to see Barney Ford standing at his elbow!

With the greatest difficulty he avoided uttering a shriek of despair. His teeth chattered, he broke into a cold sweat, and would



have fallen backwards if Barney had not caught him.

Had there been a spectator of the scene, such an one, even by the pale sulphurous gleam of the match which had fallen on the ground, might have seen a smile of hideous joy and triumph pass over the face of the shopman; but it was not his object yet to throw off the mask.

"Hush! hush!" whispered he, gently laying his hand on Luke's shoulder, "hush! my good fellow, don't be alarmed. I was waked by the creaking of your door, and the sound of your steps, and so followed you down stairs, fearing you were ill; but I see you have only been walking in your sleep. I used to do so myself when I was a boy. Hush! don't speak, or we shall wake somebody, and they will begin to wonder what we are doing about the house at this time of night. Hush! don't answer. Lean on my shoulder, and let us get to bed again."

And Barney led him up stairs, and made him get into bed, and then gently closed the door, and returned to his own apartment.

But as he went he rubbed his hands, and muttered to himself, "The trap is down. Another fool caught."

Luke buried his face in his pillow in an agony of fear and misery. Had he been discovered? Would Barney betray him? What should be the next step? What would become of him? Oh wretched, wretched youth! "*There is no peace,*" saith the Word of God, "*for the wicked.*"

In the morning Ford entered his room before he was dressed, and inquired after his health in the most natural manner, and as if he suspected nothing.

Luke persuaded himself that he had not been detected. "And yet," thought he, "what does it matter? sooner or later he must know. It was he who first put the idea into my head, and when I pay him the money, he must guess where it comes from. I had better tell him."

And he began to do so, but Barney ingeniously prevented him from making any disclosure, and hastily left the room. The business of the shop, and influx of customers,

prevented any further conversation till noon, when Ford desired Luke to go out into the town with some parcels. Luke availed himself of the opportunity, carried the bag down to Levi Abrahams', and in a few seconds saw three bright sovereigns shining in his hand, and received the Jew's assurance that he should be at all times ready to do *business* with him.

Luke hurried out of the house, threaded his way through the narrow alleys and passages, saw constable Irons in the distance, and hid behind a gate-way till he had passed, and only stopped to take breath when he got into the High Street. "*The wicked,*" saith Solomon, "*flee when no man pursueth.*"

But Luke was not destined to reach home without interruption; for, before he had gone many paces, he received a slap on the shoulder, and a hearty voice exclaimed, "Why, Luke, Luke Sharp! I was sure it was you before I crossed over. How glad am I to see you again! How are you?"

Luke started, turned pale, and stared at the stranger, who was a youth of his own age, comely and well knit, better dressed than

himself, with a happy innocent expression of countenance, such as it is a pleasure to look upon.

"Eh! what? you don't pretend not to know me, do you? You haven't forgotten Ned Smith, have you? Why, man, I've frightened you out of your wits, you look as if you had seen a ghost, or as if the constable were at your heels."

Luke started once more, and looked behind him, and then his face changed from paleness to crimson. He stammered forth some expression of surprise, and added, though the words seemed to choke him, that he was glad to see an old friend.

"Glad! I should think so indeed! And how are you? I should have known you anywhere, but this sooty, smoky, stinking town don't seem to agree with you; you are thin, and care-worn to what you used to be."

Luke could only sigh and turn away his head from Ned's searching gaze.

"And so you really didn't know me?" continued Smith, with a merry laugh.

"Why, I wasn't thinking about old times

just then, Ned," said Luke, "and you have shot up into such a man, and you've put out such a beard."

"Aye, aye, father says anybody might swear I was his son by my black muzzle. But how are you, man? and what are you doing? And how are you getting on? You've got a shop of your own by this time, I'll be bound. You were so sharp at your book, you always beat me hollow, though I was a couple of years older than you. Have you seen old Dilwyn lately?"

It was lucky for Luke that such a quantity of questions had been proposed to him, that it was only necessary for him to answer that particular one which he pleased. He replied that he was still with his uncle Atkins; and, anxious to divert inquiry from himself, he proceeded to ask his companion what he was doing, and where he was living.

"Oh," answered Ned, "never was any one such a lucky fellow as I am. Something happened after you left Yateshull which gave Mr. Warlingham a good opinion of me...."

"Nay, he had always that,—and you de-

served it," said Luke sadly enough, "but what happened?"

"Never mind that," replied Ned blushing, though he might well have been proud to tell. "The long and short of it was, that the Vicar thought me steady and trustworthy, and so he never rested till he got me into Mr. Wren's (the architect's) office at Stafford. And Mr. Wren is so kind, and I am getting on so famously. I'm as happy as the day is long."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I'm come over on Mr. Wren's business, about the church."

"What church?"

"Why, that which is going to be built in place of the old one up yonder."

"Oh, I didn't know.... I hadn't heard," replied Luke in some confusion.

"Hadn't heard? why where have you been living? You go to church, I suppose?"

Luke was glad to evade an answer. He was now within a few yards of his uncle's shop, and he said he was afraid he could not stop any longer.

"I'll go with you," said Ned, "and ask

them to spare you for a bit this afternoon. Couldn't you meet me at the Crown at six?" Ned grew so urgent that Luke could find no more excuses, and promised to come.

Lost and miserable as he was, the thought of talking with an old companion of by-gone years of comparative innocence, was a greater happiness to him than anything he had felt for many months. It was as if he had passed out of a poisoned atmosphere into one of health and purity. But alas! the poison which he had inhaled had already corrupted his blood, and the purest air will not restore those on whose vitals disease is preying.

And Luke's better impulses soon passed away, for in a few moments more he was in the company of his tempter.

"Who was that gentleman to whom you were talking?" asked Barney, whose fears and suspicions were always on the alert.

"Only an old school-fellow, Ned Smith," replied Luke. "I have not seen him since I've been at Birdsley, and if you can spare me a bit this evening, I have promised to meet him at the Crown."

Barney's face was overcast. "I don't know whether I can," said he, "and besides, I want to speak to you about that small debt you owe me. You know to-morrow's the day for payment, and I really must have it."

"Oh dear me," replied Luke, "I was thinking of Ned Smith, and forgot the money. Here it is," he continued, producing the three sovereigns.

"Why, Luke," and Barney affected to start with surprise, "Where did you get this? You told me you were quite done up, and here's the bright gold notwithstanding." And Barney rung each separate piece on the counter. "Ha, ha," he continued, "I was afraid you had taken to coining. Where did you get it?"

"It has cost me dear enough," said Luke, turning away with a groan.

"How so? have you turned highwayman?"

"No, no, you know well. I see that in your face. Barney, I followed your advice."

"*My* advice! la! what do you mean?"

"I took some goods out of the warehouse."

"Dear, dear, is that all? Why, what a pother you make about trifles. If you had



been *stealing*, instead of *borrowing*, you could not have looked more guilty."

"I feel as if I had been stealing," replied Luke, and the tears came unbidden into his eyes.

"How can you be such a fool?" asked Ford. "You know as well as I do that you have no such intention. You know you mean to replace what you have taken. At least I have been quite mistaken in you if you do not." And, as he uttered the last words, the shopman endeavoured to assume a look of virtuous indignation.

"Of course I do," replied Luke, with much earnestness.

"Well, where's the harm then? You do no more than everybody else does," added the wicked liar.

"It's a comfort to hear you say so, Barney."

"The case is as I tell you; you may rely on my word. Therefore don't make yourself uneasy. Have you got any more money?"

"No, I only took goods enough to enable me to repay you."

"That was a pity; for while you were about

it, it would have been no risk or trouble to have taken a little more, and money you must have directly."

"Why?"

"That is just what I'm going to tell you. Since you have been out Joe Swindell has been in, to ask us both to put into the raffle. His grandmother has left him a gold watch and seals, and as he has got a watch already he doesn't want another. And so he's going to have a raffle to-morrow. Twenty tickets at five shillings each. He said he could have sold all the tickets in half-an-hour, but he had purposely kept back two for us."

"But I can't take a ticket," replied Luke.  
"I have got no money."

"Oh, it's quite impossible that you can do such an affronting thing as to refuse, after Joe has gone out of his way to pay you such a compliment. If you do that you must make up your mind that he will never speak to you again. And then you are so lucky,—always so lucky,—that I would wager anything almost that you win the watch. You never saw such a handsome one, and such a beautiful seal,

with a thistle, and 'Dinna forget' cut on the stone."

This was true, but the watch was stolen, and Swindell was anxious to get rid of it. If Luke had reflected for a moment he would have known that Joe must have had some other reason than appeared, for selling a gold watch, chain, and seals for five pounds. But clever people sometimes think reflection unnecessary.

There was a pause. The thought of such an addition to his possessions was very dazzling. A watch! it was the thing he had been longing for for years. And then such an opportunity as the present! The chance of getting such a valuable thing for a mere trifle! The temptation grew stronger and stronger every moment. There was no sense of religion, and so Luke made no resistance.

"How unfortunate!" he exclaimed, "what a miserable fellow I am! What can I do, Barney?"

"Do?"—said Barney, with a laugh, as if what he suggested was so obvious 'to the meanest capacity' as to be a matter of course,—

"Do? why, what you have done already, to be sure. Milk the cow to-night that you milked last night."

"But I've taken so much already,—three pounds' worth."

"Well, you only want five shillings more. What are five shillings? I'll engage to say that if you look sharp you'll replace the whole sum in a couple of months. Come, take my advice; if you'll be home by about nine o'clock this evening, I'll take care that the coast is clear, and you can go in and get what you want."

Once more Luke yielded.

*O you, if any such there be, who read these pages, who are hesitating in your minds whether to do, or abstain from doing, what your conscience does not approve, be warned, be warned in time by the example of this unhappy youth, and flee from that which is still in your power to escape!*

Six o'clock came, and Luke was on his way to meet Ned Smith; but all his light-heartedness had fled, and instead of anticipating a pleasant meeting, he felt like a criminal going to be condemned.

Something there had been in his manner and appearance which had filled the mind of his school-fellow with melancholy foreboding respecting him, which further inquiry abundantly confirmed. He had been shocked by Luke's haggard looks and reckless manner, and that indescribable something, which it is impossible to mistake, but which is so distressing and revolting to an uncorrupted mind, and which is the sure index and token of habits of early viciousness. "To the pure," saith the Apostle, "all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."

In vain Edward Smith endeavoured, with the utmost kindness and tenderness, to lead Luke to speak of himself and his companions, his present feelings and future prospects: the guilty conscience was absorbed in its fears, and Luke threw such reserve into his manner that his old school-fellow could not penetrate it. He confessed he was unhappy: his face, once so handsome had now a bold, bad expression, which told of recklessness and self-

indulgence. So Edward formed his own conclusions, and when, with much prudence and discretion, he had said what he thought had the best chance of finding its way to the hearer's heart, the two young men separated; and both felt that there was a great gulf between them, and that it was a relief to part.

There was, indeed, a gulf between them,—a gulf as wide as that which is set betwixt heaven and hell: for the one was living without God in the world, with vice and worldliness for his idols, and knowledge, falsely so called, for his trust; the other was walking humbly with his God, and making His law the rule of his life, and striving to glorify Him by strict and willing obedience.

And now the catastrophe which the reader has long foreseen was at hand. Ford's scheme was ripe for execution, and Luke was too hopelessly involved to have a chance of escape.

No sooner had the unhappy youth left the shop to join Edward Smith, than Barney, with a face of hypocritical sorrow, entered his master's chamber, and with much seeming hesitation,

and even affected tears, intimated to him that circumstances had come to his knowledge which led him to the conclusion that Luke was dishonest, and was even ungrateful enough to be robbing his benefactor. He spoke of Luke's expensive way of dressing, of the sums of money he had seen in his hands of late, and finally declared how, the previous evening, he had watched him quitting his apartment, and busying himself in hiding a bag of cinnamon.

The sick man was deeply shocked, and still more so, when, leaning on Barney's arm, he entered the warehouse and found that a robbery had been committed.

He was about to send for Luke and question him; but this, as Barney knew full well, would spoil all; and had Mr. Atkins persisted in his intention, Barney would have taken care to give Luke notice to escape. But even then there might have been a risk of subsequent explanations.

"No, sir," said the wily miscreant, "if you will be guided by me, you yet may save the unfortunate youth, by giving him a shock such as he will not forget to the longest day he

lives. He supposes you to be too unwell to leave your chamber, and takes advantage of your infirmity to rob you. From something which he dropped incautiously, I suspect he means to enter the warehouse about nine this evening. Let me wheel you there, and when he opens the door let his injured benefactor be the first object that meets his eyes. If he has not a heart of stone," added Barney, apparently with deep emotion, "such a sight must turn him from his evil ways for ever!"

The old man, anxious that his nephew should not be made a public example, and desirous, if possible, to save him, entered into the scheme, and did as he was recommended.

At nine o'clock, when Luke returned home, Barney assured him that all the inmates of the house were occupied, and that now was his time. "Do you go to the warehouse, and I will stay at the house door and watch."

Luke left him, and with a palpitating heart Barney listened to his retreating footsteps: he has reached the bottom of the passage; is



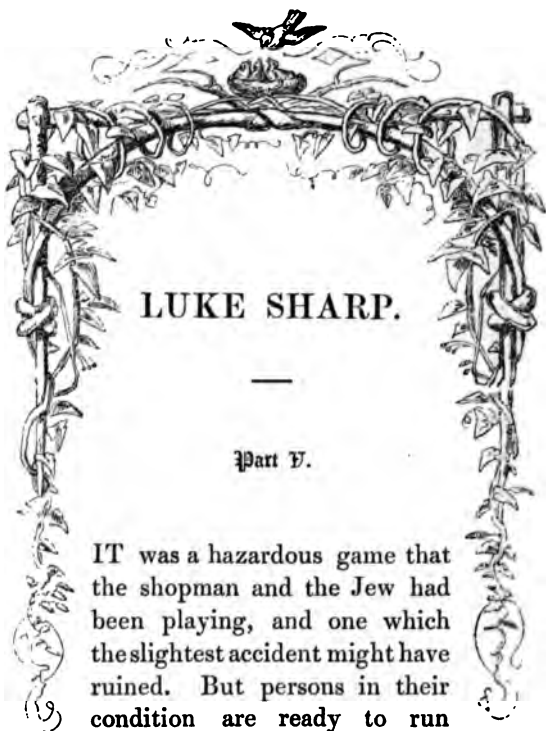
mounting the stairs; has got to the landing. In another moment his fate is sealed. Barney stretched out his neck to see what happened, but all objects were hidden in the gloom of night.

On a sudden, there was the sound of an opening door, followed by a loud exclamation of surprise and horror. The door was instantly banged to, and locked. Luke, at his topmost speed, was bounding down the stairs,—nearer, nearer, nearer. He tears along the passage, and throws himself upon Barney.

"Let me out, Barney, let me out of the house, or I shall kill some of you. I'm ruined, lost, undone! My uncle has discovered that I have robbed him. Oh, save me, save me! help me to escape!"

Instantly Ford muttered in a deep, low voice, "Fly and hide yourself at once. Go to Levi Abrahams; he will hide you, and disguise you too." He opened the door, and Luke rushed into the street. Ford watched him till he was out of sight, and then burst into a laugh. "My eyes! how he did spin *along*! Well, I've finished the young man's

business handsomely, and now I must look after the old one. Ha, ha, ha! what fools people are! Ha, ha, ha!" .



## LUKE SHARP.

—  
Part V.

IT was a hazardous game that the shopman and the Jew had been playing, and one which the slightest accident might have ruined. But persons in their condition are ready to run great risks in the hope of accomplishing their nefarious purposes, for their feeling is, that *they may gain much, and can lose but little.*

They are, indeed, in a great measure, reckless as to consequences, for they have put away from them the fear of God, and as their hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them, they have ceased to be affected by the motives which influence the common mass of their fellow-creatures.

It was a hazardous game, but they had calculated (and, as the event proved, correctly) that the chances were in their favour. They had studied the characters and tempers of the persons with whom they had to deal; they had laid a plan for a most extensive system of plunder, which they felt could never be effected till Luke was removed; the state of Mr. Atkins' health, and the probability of his speedy death, made them grudge the loss of every day that Luke remained in the shop; they therefore did not hesitate to compromise themselves to a certain extent in their plot against the unhappy youth, for they had no fears but that, even if things turned out contrary to their expectations, they would be able to screen themselves, and pervert Mr.

Atkins' judgment with respect to the whole transaction. The only serious difficulty arose from the question, what was to be done with Luke. And this was got rid of by the arrangement, that Abrahams should receive him into his house, and on the first opportunity provide a situation for him among some of his acquaintance at a distance,—a thing not hard to be accomplished by one who was in communication with the receivers of stolen goods in all the chief towns of the kingdom, and who was in the habit of transacting business with them "on terms of mutual accommodation."

When, therefore, in his terror and dismay, Luke rushed forth into the street, and, obeying Barney's direction, darted along the back lanes, and tortuous passages of this close-packed town, till he reached the well-known establishment in Rogue's Alley, he had only to approach the door, and it was opened, and the Jew, in the blandest possible tone, invited him to enter and rest himself.

He had been standing at the window, he

said, accidentally (the truth being that he had been watching there for an hour in anticipation of this very event), and seeing Mr. Sharp come down the street in such a hurry with no hat on, he was afraid that something was the matter: he "trusted, however, that nothing serious was amiss."

Luke was too much agitated to be suspicious, otherwise, it must be presumed, he could hardly have helped being struck with so many coincidences all tending to render him a mere tool in the hands of Ford and Abrahams. He now only felt that in his need he had found a friend. And while he told his story unreservedly, and confessed what he had done, he was so far overcome with shame, that he continued to gaze on the ground, and so failed to mark the smile of satisfaction on the Jew's face, and the twinkle of triumphant roguery in his little pig-like eyes.

"Very unfortunate, very unfortunate certainly," observed Abrahams, when Luke had told his tale. "I fear you were imprudent. Let me advise you, on all future occasions, to

look through the key-hole before you insert the key. Ah, true, I know what you would say; it was dark. Well, well, accidents will happen sometimes; there is no guarding against them. But we must lose no time in removing you out of harm's way; for the affair is sure to get wind, and even if your uncle were disposed to pass it over (which, from all I have heard of him, is not likely), there have been so many cases of the same kind lately, and that officious, meddling, busybody, old Grinderstone, sets our police to ferret out such matters with so much activity, that I declare nobody seems safe for a moment. It is all I can do to keep out of trouble myself. Now, it would be a thousand pities if such a promising young man as you" (Luke could not help remembering when this piece of flattery had been last used) "were to have all your prospects in life blighted for such a 'two-penny halfpenny business' as this."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Luke, clasping his hands, "I feel that they are already hopelessly, irrecoverably blighted. I wish I were dead, I wish . . ."

"I wish, Mr. Sharp, you would allow me to speak. What good would your dying do to yourself, or to anybody else? I am really surprised to hear a person of your penetration talk such stuff. And as to your prospects being blighted, if you will only be guided by me, I think I can put you in the way to get on in the world."

Luke assured Mr. Abrahams that he should be grateful for his advice.

"Well, then, you shall stay here to-night, and to-morrow evening, when we've changed your dress, and dyed your hair a little, you shall go off to B———; a cousin of mine, Mr. Israel Manasses (I dare say you have heard of Money Manasses), has a ready-made clothing warehouse, and employs hundreds of hands."

"I never could be a tailor," exclaimed Luke in despair at the prospect which seemed to open upon him.

"You are hasty, Mr. Sharp," replied the Jew meekly, "and you must allow me to say that too much haste has marred many a clever



fellow's fortune. I was not going to recommend you to be a tailor; but in all large establishments of this kind the journeymen employ a reader; there is a vacancy in that office now, and I have heard so much of your literary accomplishments, that I should have no scruple in recommending you as admirably qualified to fill it."

"A reader?" said Luke hesitating, for he did not understand the term.

"I will explain," answered the Jew. "The journeymen and master subscribe to support a gentleman to read aloud to them during their working hours. Conversation must flag occasionally, and they like to be amused by the daily papers,—the last good novel, and so forth."

Luke's countenance brightened at the proposal, and still more, when he heard the amount of his weekly wages. He said he thought nothing could have suited him better, and he would thankfully accept the situation.

And so Luke removed from Birdsley; and the coast was left clear for Ford and Abrahams; and a wholesale system of plunder com-

menced, and was carried on till the death of Mr. Atkins.

*But their day of reckoning came at last.*

We must now hasten to the conclusion of our tale. From boyhood to youth; from youth to opening manhood we have pursued the melancholy, but most instructive history of Luke Sharp. We have seen the utter uselessness of an education without religion : we have seen that talent and mere worldly knowledge, without Christian principle to direct and control them, are the most perilous possessions that we can have. We have traced Luke's career step by step, and have established, beyond all fear of contradiction, that to that cause, and that cause only, his miserable career was attributable.

Hitherto, we have entered into the minute details of his conduct with much particularity. But we can do so no more. We cannot pollute our pages with scenes which would make our readers blush, or introduce them to company and conversations from which they would turn with loathing and disgust. The

erring boy has become a wicked man ; and with advance of years came progress in the vices of maturer age. We can, therefore, only speak generally of the incidents of Luke Sharp's future career.

It was not to be expected that a situation recommended by Mr. Levi Abrahams would have much in it that could approve itself to the mind of a well-disposed person ; and certainly, there was much which passed before the eyes and ears of all who were engaged in the establishment, which was presided over by Israel Manasses, which could hardly fail to harden them in vice, and accustom them to look with contempt on the ways of truth and honesty.

But with the business-part of that establishment Luke had no concern. He was engaged to read. And from morning to night he did read ; hour after hour, till voice and strength were gone. But he soon got accustomed to his task. And if bodily fatigue had been all the evil which accrued to him from his new position, there would have been

little to deplore in his change of circumstances.

But what does the reader suppose was the nature of the works read ? They were those of the most exciting and wicked kind. Those Sunday newspapers which attain their enormous circulation by pandering to the worst passions of the populace, which, with unceasing activity and great talent, labour to overthrow all the institutions of the country, moral, social, and political ; which denounce religion as the lie of priests, loyalty as folly, morality as against nature ; which set the poor against the rich, and incite them to rapine and rebellion as the proper means of avenging their wrongs ; which labour continually to brutalize and sensualize the entire population of the country,—these were the most favourite journals perused. Next came those which were filled with the scandals and follies of what is called “ high life,” or those whose pages contain the history of races, and prize fights, and boxing matches, and which are the chronicles of slang and blackguardism.

Other works were translations of the profligate memoirs and licentious novels of modern

France, in which all the worst propensities of our fallen nature are excused, in which crime is glossed over or made attractive, and in which murder, and adultery, and kindred vices are represented as virtues in a "hero."

Worst of all, were a class of books,—the shame and disgrace of our own press,—in which the doctrines of infidelity are taught, in which fools are persuaded to say in their hearts that there is no God, and in which they are exhorted to tremble no more at the apprehension of a judgment to come.

Month after month was it Luke's occupation to corrupt his own mind, and the minds of those who listened to him, by such poisons as these. And to his shame be it spoken, that instead of quitting the situation at once, when he knew what was required of him, he conquered his lingering scruples and remained. And then, by degrees, the wicked longings which had filled his imagination were shewn in overt acts.

His previous history has evidenced that low company had its charms for him, and as his mind became more debased, he loved it

better still. When working hours were over, he joined those who had been meditating evil all the day in practising it. At the tavern, at the play-house, at the political meeting, at the resorts of the profligate and profane, who now so frequently to be seen as Luke? And still, as he became worse and worse, he endeavoured to unlearn and forget the lessons of his youth, and to silence that voice which, in spite of him, would keep whispering in his ear, alike in the crowd as in the solitude, *that by and by he must die, and that after Death must come the Judgment*. In one word, he was doing all he could to become in faith what he was already in practice,—an *Infidel*,—that is, the wickedest, the weakest, the most credulous, the most contemptible of men!

Well, indeed, may it be said, that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.” The superficial smattering which he had gained had been just sufficient to make him vain of what he did know, without suggesting to him the thought, that what he did not know was immeasurable, and that although, unhappily for himself, he had picked up just enough to

enable him to talk fluently, and to startle people who took all he said for granted, he was, in fact, profoundly ignorant. Puffed up with the information he had gleaned from Penny Cyclopædias and Mechanics Institutes, he set up as a scoffer and caviller at everything which was beyond his own comprehension, and thus made his very talents the instruments of his own destruction.

Better, far better that he had never learned to read, than so abuse his privilege. Better that a mill-stone had been bound round his neck, and he had been drowned in the depths of the sea, than that he should have infused one doubt into the mind of any who as yet were not infected with the plague of unbelief.

It was only to be expected that one who had cast off the fear of God would soon set all human law at defiance. And so it fell out.

The huge, overgrown manufacturing town in which he was residing, long teeming with ignorance, vice, and misery, had now become a hotbed of sedition and treason. The doctrines of Chartism, Socialism, and all their

kindred abominations, had for some time past been diligently inculcated on the people as the only means of relief from the evils which they were suffering. Agitators, as they were called (that is to say, wandering vagabonds, who were the paid emissaries of more powerful revolutionists, and the profligate adherents of that species of patriotism, which is "the last refuge of a scoundrel)," were now perambulating the country, and preparing the way for a grand outbreak.

To some of these Luke joined himself. They were glad of his aid, for he was a fluent speaker, and with a little practice, was able to make a powerful impression on the bad passions of his auditors. And he was no less glad of the engagement, for he was well paid; and the continual excitement and change of scene was far pleasanter than the exhaustion and confinement of the tailors' work-room. He soon became one of the most noisy declaimers on Liberty, Equality, the Rights of Man. What he meant by half the terms he used, he hardly knew, but they went down with the populace, and that was all that he, or those



who employed him, cared about. Their real object was, of course, wholly different from their professed one. They cared nothing for the wrongs and sufferings of the poor. They cared for nobody but themselves. And their hope was, that when they had stirred up the working population to insurrection, they would be able to enrich themselves in the times of plunder and confusion which would ensue.

Unhappily their poor, misguided tools believed them, and trusted to their promises. And so at the appointed time the insurrectionary movement commenced, and spread from town to town, and from district to district, till all the great manufacturing counties of England were in a state of open rebellion to the laws. In the cotton factories, the potteries, the collieries, the mines, labour was at a stand. Every place was filled with rioting and violence; neither life nor property were secure. The dwellings of the clergy and magistrates were fired; shops were broken into and ransacked; the vaults of liquor-merchants, and the breweries, were plundered. Many lives were lost; many perished in the flames

they had kindled; many drank themselves to death; many were killed in the attack or defence of public buildings, and not a few fell under the sabres of the soldiery, or were shot by them in the crowded streets. For several weeks a state of things continued, which is too fresh in the reader's recollection to render any further details necessary, but which afforded much ground of apprehension to all peaceable and well-disposed persons.

At length the government took vigorous measures. The offended law vindicated its authority. The insurrection (as is always the case) was put down without the slightest difficulty; and, (as is always the case, too, under similar circumstances), the persons who were found to have suffered most were the poor mechanics and artizans, who, being egged on by designing persons, had exposed themselves to the violence of the fray.

Then came the hour of retribution. The gaols were filled with prisoners, and those who escaped the vengeance of the law, returned home to their starving families, with prospects a hundred-fold more gloomy than those which had tempted them to rebellion.

A special commission, as it is called, was issued; that is to say, the Queen sent down her judges to the places where the assizes are usually held, and they proceeded at once to try the prisoners who had been taken in charge for their offences.

And when the Chief Justice, as is usual, had made his charge to the Grand Jury, he finished his address by "expressing his earnest hope that the administration of criminal justice under the special commission, would teach the guilty that speedy punishment would follow crime; would teach those who were inclined to subvert the law, that it was too strong for them, and that the honest part of the community, the lovers of peace and order, would unite with the authorities to put down the evil-doers with a strong hand. He would only," he said, "in conclusion, further suggest, that the effectual, *and only effectual method* of counteracting the attempts of wicked and designing men to undermine the principles of the lower classes, and render them discontented with the established institutions of their country, was the diffusion of

sound RELIGIOUS knowledge among those classes who are the most exposed to their attempts, and *the education of their children* IN THE FEAR OF GOD, so that all might be taught that obedience to the law of the land, and to the government of the country, is due, not as a matter of compulsion, but of principle and conscience."\*

Then the trials began. And among the first of those ringleaders who were brought to the bar of justice, for their treasonable attempts in urging the people to rebellion, was the miserable man whose history we are now bringing to a close.

Luke Sharp was put on trial for his life. And when the Jury had heard the evidence against him, without the slightest hesitation they pronounced him guilty. And their decision involved a sentence of *Death*.

And now how shall I describe Luke's condition, when, after hearing the fatal verdict, he was led back to his cell, until the fate of some of his other companions in wickedness was decided? In a moment his whole life

\* See Chief Justice Tindal's Charge at Stafford. October 3, 1842.

seemed to pass in review before him ; with inconceivable rapidity and clearness the follies and sins of a life-time seemed each with a separate voice to speak and invoke the vengeance of that God Whom he had insulted and denied. How hateful then were all those things which most he had prized ! how contemptible his vanity ! how useless and worse than useless, his *knowledge* and *cleverness* ! The scales had fallen from his eyes. He saw at length his condition in all its frightful reality and truth. He no longer dared to trifle with his conscience. He felt as sure that God's Word was true as of his own existence. No doubts, no scoffing, no cavils now ! but dark despair and woe unutterable. His days numbered ; a shameful death ; and beyond the grave,—what he dared not think. Only dim forebodings of the undying worm, and fires that never can be quenched, of a lake of fire and brimstone, and the smoke and torment rising up eternally, joined with the remembrance of the long-neglected denunciation of Scripture, that the servant “ which *knew his Lord's will*, and prepared not him-

self, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

"*Many stripes ! many stripes ! many stripes !*" These were the only words that the wretched young man uttered. And as he paced up and down his narrow cell, hundreds of times did he gasp them forth: "*Many stripes ! many stripes !*"

Then he sank exhausted with agony of mind on his pallet, and once more the scenes of childhood, youth, and manhood, passed before him ; aye, and his thoughts wandered back to the wide meadows, and winding river, and venerable tower of Yateshull Church. And the companions of his boyhood, and the old familiar faces of the villagers ; nay, the very games and sports in which he had joined, and the sound of the church bell, and plaintive voices of the choristers, with whose solemn chants in days of yore his own voice had mingled,—all came back.

And then revived the shuddering thought, that hopes, and friends, and opportunities, he had cast them all away ; that he had never tried in earnest to be religious ; that even his

best emotions had passed away, and produced no results. "Mere natural virtue," that is, the virtue of the *feelings*, "wears away when men neglect to deepen it into religious principle."

This had been Luke's case. He saw it all clearly enough now; *now, when it was too late*. He had known his Lord's will, but had not prepared himself.

"Many stripes! many stripes!" sobbed forth the conscience-stricken man. "Many stripes! many stripes!"

Suddenly he hears footsteps. The bolts are withdrawn. The officers of the prison lead him back into the court, and they whisper to him to be a man, for he is *not* to die.

Ah! had he known what was in store for him, would his heart have bounded with joy at the intelligence, and smote against his ribs, as if struggling to burst its narrow walls? Life! Life! If he were but permitted to live, he felt as if he cared not what befel him,—he could endure it all.

*But there is a life which is worse than death.*

“Young man,” said the venerable judge, when in due course he proceeded to pass sentence on Luke, “you have already heard, in my previous remarks to your fellow-culprits, that your life is to be spared. But you must not think that, because you escape a shameful and ignominious execution on the gallows, that, therefore, the offended laws of your country have no further claim for satisfaction. No, you have been an enormous offender, and it is but fit that for the sake of others you should suffer enormously. I can assure you that it is only after the greatest doubt, hesitation, and misgiving, that we have finally determined to recommend you to the mercy of the crown. For had it not been for you and some others, hundreds of your misguided countrymen would not have been guilty of breaking the law. Sedition and disloyalty would never have entered their minds but for you.

“I am told that you have been well educated for your rank; and that you had, at least in early life, what many of those who stand at this bar have not received,—a *Christian* edu-



cation. So much the worse for you, since you subsequently failed to profit by it.

“Your conduct on your trial, and the charges brought home to you, show that you have a considerable share of natural cleverness. So much the worse for you, since you have turned your talents to such bad account.

“You are very young, and may have many years of life before you. But how many soever those years may be, I now announce to you, that, as the punishment of your heinous offence, and as a warning to others, they must all be passed in a condition of the most hopeless and depressing misery. You must be held forth as an example of the fate of those who lead on their ignorant fellow-subjects to crime, and who abuse their own talents, by making them minister to their bad passions. In your history must be read an admonition to those who think that, provided they have knowledge, they can do without religion. May that God Whom you have forgotten bring you to repentance and amendment!

“Your sentence is, that you be transported

for the term of your natural life, to such place beyond the seas as her Majesty shall appoint; and I forewarn you, that in just judgment on your crime, that place will be the most penal settlement of the penal colonies."

Misfortune is almost sure to destroy mere worldly friendships; but Luke had still a friend: one whom, no long time since, he turned away from, and perhaps disliked for his truthfulness, but whose worth he now fully appreciated. It has been already mentioned that Edward Smith was living at Stafford, and, therefore, he had many opportunities of visiting Luke in his affliction. He came to him in prison continually, and did all that he could before the trial to prepare Luke for the fate which seemed inevitable.

He was present at the trial, and when the sentence was passed, and Luke removed to the gaol, the young architect revisited his unhappy school-fellow once more. It was a tearful meeting: but when the first excitement was over, and Luke's spirits were somewhat revived at the reflection that his life

would be spared, he almost reproached Edward for not sharing his joy.

"I do share it," said the latter, "I do share it, for you may have full time to perfect your repentance, and almost anything is tolerable in comparison with the thought of a death of public shame."

"Why, Ned, you speak as if transportation were almost as bad as death. There are people in this prison who have told me of convicts dying worth fifty thousand pounds, and who say that if a man is steady and well-behaved he may soon be happier and more comfortable than ever he was at home."

"Luke!" replied his friend in a solemn tone, "you must not deceive yourself. Did those persons ever speak to you of Port Arthur, or Norfolk Island?"

"No, I never heard them."

"Perhaps few have done so. The innocent have no concern with such places. The guilty either never return from them, or dare not trust themselves to speak of them."

"Why, Ned? What are they like?"

"Do not ask me, Luke. Perhaps things *are mended* there."

"Nay, but do tell me. It is better to know the worst."

"No, Luke," said Edward Smith sadly and earnestly, "I cannot. I have read that on the frowning rocks of those distant lands, there ought to be written the dismal words, 'Leave *hope* behind, all ye who enter here!' But oh, Luke, dear Luke, no place *can* be hopeless wherein God's mercy may yet be sought. And bad as things may be, He will be with you to support and comfort you if you do but seek Him; and when trouble is heaviest, help will be nighest. Do but turn to Him with your whole heart, and guilty as you have been, and are,—deeply, deeply as you have insulted and offended Him,—He will not cast you off for ever: nay, if He sees you a *true penitent*, He will never leave you nor forsake you. Though you pass through the waters, He shall be with you; and through the fire, it shall not burn you!"

Three years passed away. And Edward Smith was still advancing in worldly prosperity, and in the regard and good opinion of

his employers. And he had a happy home of his own, and a gentle, affectionate wife, and a little, merry-hearted, innocent child. And better than all, he was serving God faithfully in his generation, and walking steadily in His faith and fear. Need I say that he was happy?

Yet at times a shade would pass over his face when he thought of poor, lost Luke. Often and often would he rise in the night to pray for him. Often would he beseech God to bring him to repentance, and then (if it seemed good to Him) to shorten his trial.

And when the following letter, penned in a trembling hand and blotted with tears, reached him, he felt that his prayer was about to be accomplished. They were the last tidings that he ever received of Luke Sharp,—who was probably soon afterwards laid in that saddest of all cemeteries, the thickly-peopled burial ground of Norfolk Island, which,—(meet accompaniments of a graveyard where rows of murderers lay side by side!)—is embowered among thick, melancholy groves of the tear-dropping manchineel, and whose sole

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outlet is towards the dark, moaning, agitated, sea!

“Convicts’ Hospital, Norfolk Island.

“My dear and constant Friend,

“I almost hesitate to write to you, for why should your kind heart be pained by recollections of such a wretched, guilty being as I am? Yet you bade me write to you, and you are too true to say what you did not mean. And I have another reason for writing, for I am anxious, before my miserable career is ended, to thank you once more for all your goodness to me, and to assure you that, by God’s goodness, I have been brought to feel how deeply I have offended Him, and that the desire of making my peace with Him is now the one thought that fills my mind.

“I am very ill with a cough, and spitting of blood, and pain in my side, and the wardsman tells me the surgeon says there are no hopes. Hope, I am sure there is none for me *here*; but I trust there may be hope for me beyond the grave: for God is more merciful to us than

we are to one another, and I know that His Blood is efficacious enough to wash away the guilt of sins even as great as mine, and I know that you have prayed for me, and will pray for me, which is an unspeakable comfort,—for there are times when I feel almost afraid to pray for myself.

I could not write to you on the voyage, nor yet when I got here. I had no opportunity of doing so till I was sent to the hospital. Else I should have told you something I heard at Sydney—(that is the chief town of New South Wales, and the place to which convicts are often brought before they are transferred here; for, as I dare say you know, this is a small island in the midst of the sea,—a thousand miles from Sydney, and eighteen thousand miles from England,—being the place to which the worst offenders, such as I have been, are transported). Well, I saw a man at Sydney who had lately come from Port Arthur,\* which is another of the penal settle-

\* Port Arthur is situated at the southern extremity of Van Dieman's Land,—an island, as the reader is aware, of considerable extent, lying at the southern extremity of Australia.

ments, and in some respects even worse than this. Now in case you should not know it, I must tell you that this Port Arthur is situated in a place called Tasman's Peninsula. It is almost, but not quite, an island, being connected with the mainland by a narrow neck not more than three or four hundred yards across. And in order to prevent the convicts from escaping, there is a deep trench cut across this strip of land, in front of which there are a row of lamps, and not far from the lamps, a row of dogs, so placed as not to be able to destroy each other, but near enough to prevent any person passing between them. Now these dogs are immensely powerful, and being always kept chained, and fed upon raw meat, they are so ferocious that even the persons who have charge of them dare not come within the length of their chain, but are compelled to throw their food to them from a distance.\* This settlement is a most dreary, desolate spot, and the convicts are, I am told, chiefly employed in digging coal. To this place it was that Barney Ford, and Levi Abrahams

† See Appendix B.



were transported four years ago, when, as you remember, they were found guilty of plundering my poor uncle. I often used to think on the voyage out whether I should see them again, and I always prayed that I might not. I owed nothing but evil to them, but I never wished them such a fate as befel them. After being at Port Arthur for some time they made an attempt to escape, by crossing the neck of land of which I have told you. But no sooner had they come within reach of the dogs, than they were knocked down, and before the soldiers could come to their assistance, they were torn asunder, limb from limb, by the infuriated animals!\*

“ And now I must speak to you of myself. When first my eyes rested on this place, I thought it must be the most beautiful spot in the universe, and I think so still; but oh,

\* In the Parl. Rep. 1838. (Appendix, p. 310) a list is given of convicts who absconded from Macquarie Harbour, Van Dieman's Land, between January, 1822, and May, 1827. They are in number 112. Of these 70 were starved to death in the woods: three were drowned: two shot by soldiers who pursued them: seventeen were brought back and executed: eleven murdered each other, *of whom some lived on each others flesh*. Of the fate of the remaining nine nothing certain is known.

Edward, think what a place to live in that must be, where all the greatest criminals were crowded together, and where, till very lately, no minister of religion ever set foot! It was as if those who punished our bodies would not be satisfied until they had ruined our souls eternally likewise. You may judge what the consequences were. The wickedness was so great, the depravity so horrible, that I think they must have shocked the very devils in hell; nay, such monstrous forms of crime developed themselves as were never heard of in Europe, and are too bad to be alluded to in the Scriptures.\* Let a man be what he may when he comes here, it is next to impossible but that he should become worse. As one poor fellow said to the Judge who condemned him, 'When a man comes here, a man's heart

\* "I have known the well-disposed prisoner rejoice, after labouring all day, to be allowed to watch an unenclosed building during the inclement night, rather than be locked up there" (i. e., in the barrack with the other prisoners). "I have known the infirm man invoke torture elsewhere, so that he might not rest there. I have known the blind consider his privation of sight a blessing, as shutting out wickedness from one sense of his knowledge."—*Ullathorne's R. C. Mission in Australasia*, p. 17.

is taken from him, and there is given him the heart of a beast.\* And how can it be otherwise? The most depraved, and the least depraved, are herded together night and day; wear the same dress of degradation, labour at the same hopeless toil, with the lash sounding in their ears continually.† So they labour on till the very hair on their head is scorched to the same yellow hue as their sun-burnt bodies, and till their limbs stiffen with the weight of their chains, or of the burdens they are compelled to carry. And they grow more and more wicked, till they change the very meaning of language, and call evil good, and

\* See Judge Burton's Charge (1835). Parl. Rep. 1837. Appendix 13, p. 289—293.

† If this little book should fall into the hands of any person of mature years, such an one is earnestly recommended to read Dr Ullathorne's account of the (Roman) "Catholic Mission in Australasia,"—a short, but most deeply affecting work, abundantly confirmed by the Parliamentary Reports of 1837, 1838. The latter, indeed, contains a bulk of matter far too horrible and revolting for general perusal. If however, any one doubts whether our national offences are rank and cry to heaven, and whether successive governments have done all that in them lay to paralyze the Church's influence, and to leave the guilty and miserable to perish in their misery and guilt, he had better consult those dreadful volumes.

good evil:\* and if a man is seen to pray, he is flung down, and abused, and insulted, and trampled on.† Hell itself cannot be worse than this place. And so the convicts think it. It is not long since thirty-one were condemned to death for a conspiracy: but some were reprieved. And when the names of those who were to die were read out, they one after another dropped upon their knees and thanked God that they were to be delivered from this horrible place, while those who were to be spared stood mute and weeping.‡

\* "So perverse" was their most ordinary language, "that in their dialect *evil* was literally called *good*, and *good*, *evil*,—the well-disposed man was branded *wicked*, whilst the leader in monstrous vice was styled *virtuous*." —*Ullathorne's R. C. Mission*, p. 40.

† Ullathorne. Parl. Rep. 1838, p. 16. Also in his pamphlet on the R. C. Mission he says, (p. 17) "Wherever the convict goes,—to work, to church, to his meals,—he carries, tied to his person, his small canvass bag, containing his only little necessities, and perhaps a prayer-book, otherwise they would be stolen in a moment. Whilst the poor creature who, with a more timid conscience, and keener sense of his condition, seeks to separate as much as possible from the rest, and to heal his seared conscience by the prayer of repentance, offers a fine game for the chase of ridicule, and is hunted down with a mingled pack of scoffs, jeers, obscene jests, and rough practical jokes."

‡ Ullathorne. Parl. Rep. 1838. p. 27.

“Oh, may God bless you, Edward, for having warned me ‘not to give up hope’ even here. These words of your’s have come into my mind when I have been all but yielding to despair. And perhaps I should have yielded to despair, had my trial gone on much longer,—had I been compelled for long to hear and see things which are breaking strong men’s hearts daily. But I was not tempted beyond what I was able to bear. God, in His mercy, sent me my present illness, and now I am sick and, I suppose, dying, I find kindness even here. At least, I am not molested as I used to be.

“But do not think I complain. All I have experienced of shame and pain I have deserved, aye, and a hundred-fold more. But I write this in order that you may warn young men in England to take care lest they do anything which should cause them to be sent to this place of torment, and in order that you may let people know what transportation to Norfolk Island really is. Tell them my history, and what it was that ruined me. Tell them to seek knowledge if they will, but

that *knowledge without religion* is POISON  
and DEATH.

“And now, once more, God bless you. Pray for me, pray for me that I may have grace to pray aright, and that He Who had mercy for the penitent thief, may have mercy even upon me. To Him alone I look, to His merits, and His intercession.

“Farewell! God bless you and requite you for all your goodness to one who never can repay you,—

“Your most guilty, but most loving

Friend,

“LUKE SHARP.”

FINIS.



APPENDIX A.

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*Extracts from the Evidence collected by the Commissioners, on the employment of Children and young persons in the Iron Trades and other manufactures.*

“——— has lived in —— Parish all his life ; works at nails ; was apprenticed between eight and nine years old till he was one-and-twenty. His master's name was —— his great uncle ; used to beat him sadly ; often went without his meals at that time ; was made to work from six in the morning till ten at night ; this was what made his bone to grow out at his back, and in at one leg ; he always works kneeling to his block like, one knee quite in, right hand also ; 'tis from having the hammer always in his hand—about two pounds



weight. Apprentices are treated now much the same—not a bit better by some masters ; not the case with all ; there's odds in 'em—some better than some. They are not rightly apprentices, but let out by their parents for a shilling a-week the first two years ; the parents get the shillings and have to take care of the boys for it. Besides the masters beating the boys, the parents often don't give them enough to eat, nor clothe them properly ; and the masters work them too much over-hours, and give them a slap with a bar of iron,—red-hot if it happens to be ; they don't take much notice of this ; and sometimes they send a flash of lightning at them—means by this, the flashing the red-hot bar towards the boys when it's flashing out with white heat from the fires ; don't stand particular upon this going into their faces—just as it happens. A many of the boys are very distressed—hardly anything to wear ; a many of them, a vast power, are running about the street all Sunday, going to no schools, nor no place of worship.”

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“ ——— works at nails ; has worked at it above a year and a half ; gets from 3s. 6d. to 4s. a-week. His mother takes the nails he makes

into the warehouse and gets the money. His sister does the same. His mother keeps him. His sister is about seventeen, and she has what she gets, and pays her mother for her board. He has also a brother, about eight years and a half old, and his mother lets him out for 1s. a-week, at nailing. The master his little brother works for treats him well ; gives him a halfpenny for himself on a weigh-day, that is Thursday and Saturday. Works from five and six in the morning (and sometimes gets up at three o'clock in the morning), and works till about nine at night ; this is on the weigh-days, twice a-week. He is stinted to make so many pounds of nails a-day, so he is obliged to get up very early sometimes to do them ; if he fails, he is obliged to make more next week. Some of the boys are not well treated by their masters ; they don't get enough victuals, and some are beat. Knows a boy that made scraps (bad nails), and somebody in the warehouse took him and put his head down upon an iron counter and hammered a nail through one ear, and the boy made good nails ever since. They don't hammer nails through boys' ears now ; they wind 'em up sometimes. There's a hook used to wind up the nail-bags, and they put the hook in the boys' trowsers, and wind 'em up from the floor below.

through a trap in the ceiling, into the room above, with their heads downwards; but it an't high—the rooms are very low.

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“——— has been constable of —— upwards of three years. The trade in general is entirely nailing, except the mining. Very few children are apprenticed. People work with their own families, but children are sometimes hired by the year, or by two years; when so hired they live at home with their parents. The children are stinted to do so much work in the day, and they are made to do it; if they do not they are sometimes beaten with the fist, or kicked. Has known boys to be beaten with bars of iron, cold or red-hot, just as it comes to hand, or the masters send a flash of lightning all over them.”



## APPENDIX B.

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“Tasman’s Peninsula,” says Col. Arthur, in his evidence before Parliament, (see Report on Transportation, 1837 [4510]), “is cut off from all the rest of the colony of Van Dieman’s Land, with the exception of the communication by Forester’s Peninsula with the settled districts. The neck between Pirate’s Bay and Norfolk Bay is guarded by a detachment of soldiers under the charge of an officer, with a line of very fierce dogs from shore to shore. These Dogs have been so trained, that if there is the slightest noise made they immediately give the alarm, either by day or night; and so successful has been such a guard, that it is not known that more than two prisoners have ever escaped from Port Arthur: one of these was taken, the other was supposed to have perished in the

woods. The general description of the whole of the Peninsula is exceedingly desolate. Some considerable veins of coal have been found, and convicts are employed there in working the mines....The worst class of men are worked in chains at the hardest labour."



